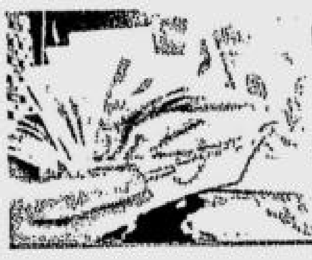


■ BUSINESS / B1

Peso continues to rally, closes at 52.66 to $1

■ WORLD / A8

Russia restores gas flow to Europe

■ ACROSS / A14

GMA orders P66M given for Calapan City rehabilitation

■ 2bU! / C1

Fearless forecast for 2006

Crime rate down–DILG; victims don't complain–poll

KAYA PALA BUMABA, E!

By DJ Yap and Norman Bordadora

THEY CERTAINLY DO NOT choose their victims.

Alleged "bukas kotse gang" members broke into the car of the former

CRIME/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Wednesday, January 4, 2006 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 27 P18
website: www.inq7.net

What's cooking? Ramos, Drilon, Sotto meet in secret

By TJ Burgonio, Michael Lim Ubac and Cynthia D. Balana

WHAT'S COOKING ON THE POLITICAL FRONT?

Former President Fidel V. Ramos, Senate President Franklin Drilon and former Sen. Vicente Sotto III met clandestinely on the first working day of the year, fueling speculation

WHAT'S/ A6

PAF graft, unrest bared

Colonel threatened with arrest

By Alcuin Papa

AN AIR FORCE COLONEL YESTERDAY SAID THAT generals and wing commanders in the Philippine Air Force (PAF) were "illegally" receiving monthly allowances of P45,000 each on top of their salaries.

Col. Efren Daquil also confirmed grumbling in the military.

"I have direct knowledge that Air Force generals, the wing commanders, are given P45,000 a month over and above their salaries and other allowances. I would like to know if CG-PAF (commanding general of the PAF) is authorized to dole out this allowance," said Daquil.

The allowance, according to him, is called the Direct Support Fund (DSF.)

Denying Daquil's allegations, the PAF said the colonel would be taken into custody and possibly charged for giving interviews without permission.

Air Force spokesperson Lt. Col. Restituto Padilla said Daquil would be restricted to quarters, investigated and possibly charged with violating two Articles of War, specifically conduct unbecoming an officer.

"If truth is unbecoming, then I'm willing to be jailed," said Daquil, former deputy wing commander of the PAF 710th Special Operations Wing based at Clark, Pampanga.

The colonel asked the PAF commanding general, Lt. Gen. Jose Reyes, to explain where P30 million in savings from his (Daquil's) stint as chief

PAF GRAFT/ A6

AIR FORCE Col. Efren Daquil talks to a select group of media men during a hastily called news conference yesterday. AP

LARGER THAN LIFE

Tadeo Palma looks wistfully at the remains of his sister, the late Justice Cecilia Muñoz-Palma, which lie in state at Mt. Carmel Church on Juana Rodriguez St., Quezon City. Palma was the first woman justice of the Supreme Court. JOAN BONDOC

JUDGE'S KILLING

9 suspects held but no brains yet

By Marlon Ramos,
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau
and Armand N. Nocum

IMUS, CAVITE—SWOOPING down on several houses in a series of raids, government agents yesterday picked up nine people, including the alleged gunman, but failed to get the mastermind behind the murder of Judge Henrick Gingoyon.

The suspected triggerman and two others among those detained in connection with the Saturday killing of Gingoyon were alleged to have been paid P150,000 to carry out the job, the National Bureau of Investigation said.

Police said some of the men were suspected members of a notorious organized crime group operating in Cavite, Metro Manila and nearby towns in the Calabarzon region.

In a news briefing at Camp Pantaleon Garcia here, Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao identified seven of those detained as Rodolfo Cruer, the supposed gunman; Rudy Baclor, Filemon "Boy Negro" Rabino, Mark Datas, Rafael Arciaga, Gregorio Ignacio and Etten Samonte.

Lomibao said Cruer was identified by at least four eyewitnesses.

An NBI report shown to reporters in Manila listed Cruer's name as "Robel Darocaluer Jr."

Besides the seven mentioned by

9 SUSPECTS/ A7

PASAY City Judge Henrick Gingoyon PDI PHOTO

Judge to demand custody of 4 US Marines

By Tonette Orejas and Allan Macatuno
PDI Central Luzon Desk

OLONGAPO CITY—THE JUDGE tapped to hear the rape case against four US Marines yesterday said he would demand custody of the accused.

"We have to assert our authority," Judge Renato Dilag said, upholding the position of the Department of Foreign Affairs that the Philippine government should have "actual, physical custody" of the Americans.

Dilag said he would review the case records and the Dec. 27 resolution charging the four US servicemen and their Filipino driver with raping a 22-year-old Filipino woman on Nov. 1 at the Subic Bay Freeport.

If he finds probable cause, he may issue the arrest warrants today or before the arraignment set on Jan. 12, Dilag said.

Citing a provision in the 1999 RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement, Dilag said he would leave it to the DFA to officially serve the warrants.

He said he was "not bound" by the statement of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez that the Philippine government should first negotiate for custody of the Americans before serving the warrants.

A DFA official speaking on condition of anonymity said the warrants would be served on the US Embassy at the DFA premises.

This was the same procedure followed in November when the

JUDGE/ A4

Judge is no stranger to controversy

By Tonette Orejas and Ansbert Joaquin
PDI Central Luzon Desk

OLONGAPO CITY—SURPRISED, but not pressured.

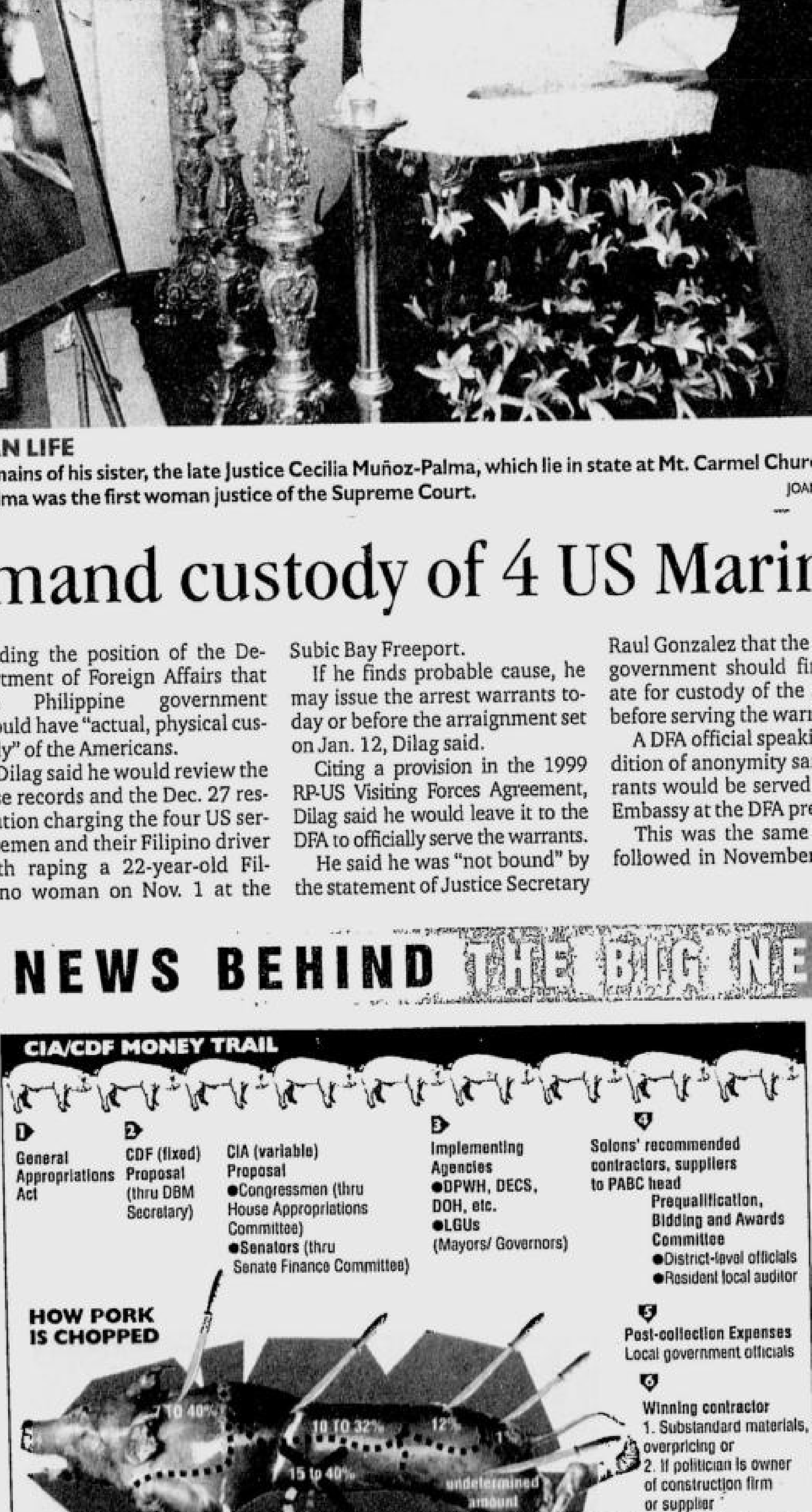
That was how Judge Renato Dilag said he felt after yesterday's raffle, when the rape case against four US Marines landed in his sala at the Regional Trial Court Branch 73 in this city.

Dilag noted that the case was "high profile" because it involved four American servicemen—the first to be charged with rape since 1992, when the US naval base at Subic was closed.

He also said he was aware that

JUDGE/ A4

NEWS BEHIND THE BIG NEWS


CIA/CDF MONEY TRAIL
1 General Appropriations Act
2 CDF (fixed) Proposal (thru DBM Secretary)
CIA (variable) Proposal
●Congressmen (thru House Appropriations Committee)
●Senators (thru Senate Finance Committee)
3 Implementing Agencies
●DPWH, DECS, DOH, etc.
●LGUs (Mayors/ Governors)
4 Solons' recommended contractors, suppliers to PABC head
Prequalification, Bidding and Awards Committee
●District-level officials
●Resident local auditor
5 Post-collection Expenses
Local government officials
6 Winning contractor
1. Substandard materials, overpricing or
2. If politician is owner of construction firm or supplier
HOW PORK IS CHOPPED
10 40%
10 TO 32%
12%
15 to 40%
undetermined amount
Actual cost of project

CHOICE cuts: Kickbacks range from a low 19 percent to a high 52 percent of a project cost.

Pork barrel: Pigging out

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr. and Armand N. Nocum

FILIPINOS ARE VAGUELY AWARE THAT the pork barrel—that euphemism for the joint raid on the National Treasury by the President and Congress in the name of infrastructure development—is a source of fat kickbacks for the most dishonorable members of Congress.

But until August 1996 when the INQUIRER published an award-winning series of articles, the public was largely in the dark about the magnitude of the amounts that regularly went into the pockets of legislators.

The most explosive reports in that series

PORK/ A6

Top 'Pook' awards go to Bohol, Or. Negros

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

A PROGRAM PROTECTING BOHOL's rich coastal resources and a project teaching school children in Oriental Negros how to grow vegetables were chosen as the top local government programs for 2005.

For their efforts, Oriental Negros and Bohol received the top award for continuing excellence from Galing Pook Foundation, which recognizes the best local governance programs in the Philippines. It is a joint program of the Galing Pook Foundation, the Department of Interior and Local Government, through its Local Government Academy, and The Ford Foundation.

In Bohol, the local government implemented programs to protect its rich coastal resources, revive and preserve its unique cultural heritage, and develop eco-tourism which has put the province on the world tourism map.

In Oriental Negros, the combination of political will and community support resulted in the establishment of barangay agricultural development centers, the revival of gardening and the improvement of nutrition in children.

TOP 'POOK'/ A7

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY CYRIL L. BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/01/04/06

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Second **FRONTPAGE**

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Scrapping of Luisita land deal appealed

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE COMPANY THAT OWNS AND MANAGES THE Cojuangco family's Hacienda Luisita has, as expected, asked the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) to reconsider its decision to revoke its stock distribution option agreement and give away the 4,915-hectare sugar estate to the farm workers.

Saying there was no legal or factual basis to cancel a fulfilled contract, the Hacienda Luisita Inc. said the PARC violated the Constitution and RA 6657, or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, when it cancelled Luisita's SDO scheme.

The PARC en banc, the highest decision-making body on agrarian reform questions, last month voted to uphold the Department of Agrarian Reform's decision to revoke the 16-year-old SDO agreement between the estate management and the farm workers.

Instead of parceling out and distributing the estate owned by the family of former President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, the SDO scheme gave the Luisita farm workers and tenants shares in the company managing the plantation.

But more than 8,000 farm workers at Luisita last year petitioned the DAR to revoke the scheme, alleging violations by the company and claiming their lives had not improved.

In its 34-page motion, the HLI said the nullification or cancellation of the SDO scheme violated Sections 1 and 10, Article 3 of the Constitution which protects against the deprivation of property without due process and the impairment of the obligations of contract.

It said the land was owned by HLI, which has a separate personality from its stockholders, the Cojuangco-owned Tarlac Development Corp. (TDC) and the farm-worker beneficiaries themselves.

"The taking of its [HLI's] property without hearing and compensation is a denial of the due process clause," the HLI said.

The HLI through its corporate secretary Emmanuel G. Cochico filed the motion for reconsideration before the PARC at 5 p.m. on Monday, beating the 10-day deadline it was given to question the PARC's decision.

HLI, which has been managing the estate for the past 16 years, insisted there was no legal and factual basis to cancel a contract that had been approved by the PARC and fulfilled by the parties to the agreement.

The HLI said it had finished the distribution of the 118,391 shares of stocks in HLI to the farmer beneficiaries in June 2004, making the farm workers co-owners of a corporation bound by corporate, not agrarian, laws.

"Full and complete execution or performance of the obligations of the TDC and HLI under the SDO [agreement] was done in 2004, yet the DAR has not yet up to now issued any certificate of completion," the HLI said.

"What is more reprehensible is that the DAR and PARC are using the DAR's failure to issue a certificate of completion as a reason or ground to grant PARC jurisdiction, power or authority to recall or revoke or nullify, cancel or resolve or rescind the SDOA after it was completely executed or performed by the parties thereto," it said.

The HLI maintained that neither the PARC nor the Department of Agrarian Reform had jurisdiction over the complaint filed by the Alyansa ng mga Manggagawang Bukid sa Luisita (Ambala) in October 2003.

"While the power to approve may include the power to disapprove, it does not include the power to recall or revoke the approval after the approved agreement has been performed," the HLI said.

SENATE TRIBUTE. Senate President Franklin Drilon stands next to the casket of the former Senator Robert Barbers at the Senate session hall where former colleagues paid tribute to the late senator. Barbers' family led by his mother, Regina (center), and wife Virginia (partly hidden at left), also attended the necrological rites.

JESS YUSON

Barbers extolled by ex-colleagues

By TJ Burgonio and Luige A. del Puerto

THE LATE SEN. ROBERT Z. BARbers was extolled yesterday as an efficient lawmaker and enforcer and, above all, as a "man for others" by people he worked closely with in the Senate and the Philippine National Police.

In moving rites in the packed Senate session hall in the morning, legislative staff, members of the judiciary, friends and relatives heard eulogies and paid their last respects to Barbers, who was a senator from 1998 to 2004.

Sen. Richard Gordon said Barbers may not have been a lawyer but he "crossed the bar by his efforts at peace and order."

He said the packed Senate session hall was testament to Barbers' soft spot for the poor. "He was a man of the people... he was a man for others," Gordon said.

Former Senator Heherson Alvarez said Barbers "enhanced the law immensely. He did this by being an insightful lawmaker."

Former Sen. Tito Sotto recalled that it was easy to find Barbers' office on the fifth floor because the corridor was always teeming with "people from all walks of life" to whom he "was always willing to lend an attentive ear or a helping hand."

Senate President Franklin Drilon recalled an anecdote about Barbers as a young policeman rushing to the aid of a beggar cradling a boy in his arms who had collapsed in front of him in Quiapo. Barbers got down next to the beggar to give him something to eat and drink.

"That dear friends and colleagues was the young Bobby Barbers... That my dear friends is character," Drilon said.

Vice President Noli de Castro and Senators Alfredo Lim and Sergio Osmeña III also delivered eulogies.

Barbers' remains were brought to the Senate at 9:45 a.m. from the Western Police District headquarters in Manila where they had lain overnight after being brought back from his province of Surigao del Norte.

At 2 p.m., Barber's remains were brought to PNP headquarters at Camp Crame in Quezon City for another overnight vigil. Barbers had spent nearly three decades as a cop before entering politics.

"People will remember him for his exploits as a cop. Even when he became a congressman and later a senator, his advocacy had always been peace and order," said his son Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers.

"Secretary Barbers... General Barbers left many legacies (in the police force). We know that even with his last breath, he remained a cop. And we are here to honor him as a policeman," said Deputy Director General Oscar Calderon, the PNP deputy chief for administration.

Barbers died on Dec. 25 of cardiac arrest at the age of 61 after a long bout with throat cancer.

Today his remains will be taken back to the Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park where they had lain earlier. Tomorrow he will be buried at noon at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque City.

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GMA: No revamp of economic team

BUOYED BY THE STERLING PERFORMANCE of the peso, stocks and bonds in 2005, President Macapagal-Arroyo has decided not to tinker with her relatively new economic management team.

In a live news broadcast from Malacañang, the President yesterday was profuse in her praise for her economic managers for maintaining "fiscal discipline" during the politically turbulent 2005, which foreign investors have rewarded by driving up the peso, stock market and Philippine debt papers to higher levels.

"I would like to thank the economic team for your good work. Our teamwork is important to sustain these positive economic indicators," said the President.

Seen by her side were Finance Secretary Margarito Teves , Budget Secretary Romulo Neri and Bureau of Internal Revenue Commissioner Jose Mari Buñag, who were all placed in their current posts after the President was all but deserted by her economic managers during the mass resignation of the so-called Hyatt 10 group of Cabinet officials last July.

After underscoring the peso's rise and stock market's rebound as a vote of approval for her fiscal reform strategy, the President noted the surge in Philippine bonds that registered the highest yield among IOUs in 2006.

A high yield for Philippine bonds meant lower debt payments for the country, she said.

She said the government saved P20 billion on debt payments last year which she planned to use for social services to enable the masses to share the benefits of the country's economic gains.

The President's obvious pleasure with the economic indicators and her economic management team should douse talks of a revamp in key economic agencies.

Teves said that as far as he knew the President has no plans about making any change in her economic team and that she has never raised the issue with them.

"It would be helpful if the team is kept intact but this is the President's prerogative," Teves said.

Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

Big catch at North Harbor: 'Blasted' fish

By Leila B. Salaverria

OPERATIVES OF THE PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD seized on Monday night some 4,550 kilos of illegally caught fish from Palawan at the Manila North Harbor.

PCG spokesperson Commander Joseph Coyme said 130 boxes of dynamited fish worth half a million pesos were confiscated from the M/V Asuncion IV, a cargo-passenger vessel that arrived from Palawan.

The use of dynamite in fishing is banned because it destroys the coral reefs that host marine life.

Coyme said that nobody had come forward to claim ownership of the fish shipment. He added the owner could have abandoned the cargo after learning of its seizure by a team from the PCG's Manila station.

The seized items were inspected immediately by a representative from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

BFAR fish examiner Arnold Gil informed the PCG that the fish appeared to have been caught using dynamite.

According to Coyme, one would be able to tell if a fish was killed by dynamite if they cut it open and check if its bones are mangled and its innards ruptured. Dynamited fish, except those that were near the blast, usually show no external damages, he added.

Hawaii gov to kick off centennial

A UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT delegation led by the governor of Hawaii was scheduled to arrive in Manila last night to take part in the Philippines' celebration of the centennial of Filipino migration to the US state.

Gov. Linda Lingle along with four state senators and representatives will be here until Jan. 11 to conduct goodwill visits mainly to the Ilocos region, origin of the first 15 Filipino sugar plantation workers to arrive on Ola'a Island in December 1906.

"The celebration is expected to open new opportunities for tourism, trade and investments in the Philippines and highlights the contribution of Filipinos to US society," said Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo in a statement.

Volt Contreras

Come and see the light, solons urge bishops

By Philip C. Tubeza

HOUSE LEADERS YESTERDAY WELCOMED the proposal of a Catholic prelate for the creation of a Bishops-Congressmen's Forum, with one of them saying that the bishops might even learn a thing or two from their congressmen, who supposedly did not know the difference between "right and wrong."

House Deputy Majority Leader Edcel Lagman said the proposal of Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla to create the forum to facilitate a free exchange of ideas in crafting important laws might even become a learning experience for the country's influential Catholic bishops.

"The formation of a Bishops-Congressmen's Forum is very much welcome but I am not agreeable to its creation on a condescending basis," said Lagman, who had clashed with the Catholic Church over a controversial population management bill.

"As long as they don't pontificate and impose their concepts on what is right and wrong, it's OK. This could help in dismantling a rigid religious orthodoxy that is very conservative (on the bishops' part)," he added.

Lagman said that the forum would be an opportunity for the bishops to learn about views different from their own and to find common ground with congressmen in passing legislation that is good for the country.

"It's better if they come over and we have discussions because they might see the light and come to respect other people's views. But they should not insist on what they think is right from wrong, as if we do not know that," he said.

In coming up with his proposal, Capalla had said that lawmakers needed a lot of help "in the discernment of what is right and wrong."

"We cannot presume members of Congress cannot discern right from wrong," said Iloilo Rep. Rolex Suplico. "We cannot presume that the people voted clowns to Congress."

"Maybe, Archbishop Capalla should name names, so that the people may know who to vote for in the next elections," he added.

BISHOP'S REPORT

'Jueteng' on holiday binge in Bicol

By Christian V. Esguerra

WHILE THE COUNTRY WAS ENJOYING the Christmas and New Year holidays, jueteng operators were having their own kind of revelry in their lucrative Bicol strongholds, according to anti-jueteng crusader Archbishop Oscar Cruz.

Operations of the multibillion-peso underground lottery resumed in the region during the Yuletide season, belying the Philippine National Police position that jueteng was under control, Cruz claimed.

"We wonder what the administration has to say and will do about this information. To consider it garbage would not be wise," he said.

Cruz, who heads the Krusadang Bayan Laban sa Jueteng, said jueteng, or the illegal numbers game, went full blast during the holidays, particularly in all four districts of Camarines Sur and parts of Albay.

He said the game's resurgence in the region was crucial as Bicol is considered the most profitable area for jueteng because of the huge amount of money that jueteng operations there generate.

To prove his claim that jueteng was back in the region, Cruz rattled off the winning numbers in the third district of Camarines Sur the other day.

Citing reports from former jueteng bet collectors, Cruz said the winning combinations were 14/23 in the morning, 12/16 in the afternoon, and 27/29 in the evening.

He said the daily triple schedule indicated that jueteng in the province was not a mere "guerrilla-type" operation but was well organized and deeply entrenched in the communities.

Guerrilla-type operations refer to a style of jueteng wherein bets are collected from specific areas while draws are conducted elsewhere. The scheme is meant to elude police who have a standing order to eliminate jueteng.

Cruz said the Bicol operations should not have escaped the police monitoring, noting that the PNP had its entire organization to run after jueteng operators.

He noted that his group, a network of 62 chapters nationwide, did not have "even a peso in intelligence funds" but has been able to identify where jueteng thrives and who are behind its operations.

He said the game disappeared for a few days in Bicol recently, but only to pave the way for the implementation of the Small Town Lottery (STL), a form of legal gambling.

STL is being aggressively promoted by anti-jueteng czar, Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn, but Cruz describes it as being essentially jueteng with a "different collar."

He said that like jueteng, STL was also a number combination game that is likely to thrive from bets coming mainly from the poor.

Cruz said it has so far failed to attract prospective franchise holders who fear that they would only lose money from the venture.

With nearly half of the earnings going to "official beneficiaries," like mayors and governors, he said no one in his right mind would want to run an STL.

"They'll just go back to jueteng," said Cruz.

Rebs kill Bicol town cop chief

By Bobby Q. Labalan
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

SORSOGON CITY – NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY rebels killed late Monday night a town police chief and two others in an ambush in Matnog town while the three were en route to check the reported presence of communist rebels.

The Sorsogon Provincial Police Office identified the fatalities as Senior Insp. Eduardo Amande, Matnog chief of police, and Pfc. Alex Cortez and Cafgu member Roger de Leon, both detailed at the Matnog police as part of the augmentation force.

SPPO director Senior Supt. Arnold Revilla said Amande and 13 other government troopers left the police station at about 11 p.m. for Barangay Bolo after they received reports about the presence of armed men in the area.

They were traveling in a convoy when several rebels, hiding near a school building, opened fire, killing the three instantly.

Revilla said some of the police and soldiers managed to fire back and were able to repulse the attackers who were forced to withdraw. He said a pursuit operation was underway to track down the rebels.

It was unclear if the NPA rebels suffered any fatalities but bloodstains found on the route of their retreat indicates they also had casualties, military spokesman Lt. Col. Serafin Raymundo said.

Col. Ernesto Pascual, commanding officer of the 2nd Infantry Battalion, said he had already dispatched additional forces to pursue the rebels.

The rebels, who have been waging a Marxist rebellion since the late 1960s, are active in Matnog, an idyllic town known for its dive spots. The military has stepped up counterinsurgency operations in Sorsogon in recent months.

Matnog was also the site of an encounter between NPA members and police personnel last Dec. 11 wherein an alleged member of the rebel group was killed and another one was captured.

With report from AFP, AP

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MJ says gov't execs 'lacking political will'

By Volt Contreras

HE MAY NOT BE THE IDEAL poster boy for Philippine sovereignty, but he's in there pitching.

Fresh from doing time in a US prison, former Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez yesterday said Philippine sovereignty was "being compromised by politics."

He said this was why the four US Marines charged with raping a Filipino woman still managed to elude detention in a local jail two months after the alleged rape.

Jimenez, an ex-adviser of ousted President Joseph Estrada, criticized Filipino officials for "lacking political will and love for fellow Filipinos."

He said not enough "pressure" was being applied on the US Embassy to turn over the servicemen.

"How come there's no leadership speaking out for this case to be given internationally accepted justice?" he said in Filipino.

Oddly, however, Jimenez spoke rather well of the nation which imprisoned him.

He called the United States "a pillar of justice" where, he said, the general citizenry would probably agree that the four Americans should be jailed here for "a heinous crime."

The controversial businessman whom Estrada once called a "corporate genius" made his views known in a hastily called press briefing at a restaurant in the Makati Shangri-La hotel.

Upstairs in the same hotel, Jimenez was also holding a "business meeting," according to a media handler.

Jimenez served a two-year prison term in the United States for tax evasion and making illegal campaign contributions to former US President Bill Clinton. He returned to Manila two weeks ago.

"I, who was then a sitting member of [the Philippine] Congress, waived my immunity and surrendered to the US for peace to return to this country [on the issue of my extradition]," he said in Filipino.

Judge is no stranger to controversy

From page A1

the issue of the Philippine government's "actual, physical custody" of the Americans was putting the provisions of the 1999 RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement to a test. *(See related story on Page A1.)*

For almost five years now, the 60-year-old Dilag has presided over Branch 73, a special court designated to handle family-related cases.

He has handled quite a number of local rape cases, but not a single criminal suit against active US servicemen.

Two weeks ago, the judge convicted a man who had raped and subsequently impregnated his own daughter.

"I find it unusual that there's a large number of rape cases here," said Dilag, a 1973 law graduate of the University of the East in Manila.

Controversy

Olongapo reporters described Dilag as "friendly."

By his own account, the man is no stranger to controversial cases in his more than 25 years of private practice after passing the bar in 1974.

Dilag worked with Dean Antonio Coronel, the late law heavyweight, as head of the litigation team in the latter's law office.

Because of his successful defense, strongman Ferdinand Marcos' widow Imelda was able to travel to Switzerland in an effort to obtain deposits of $356 million of alleged ill-gotten wealth in at least five bank accounts.

Asked if he was pro-Marcos, he let out a loud laugh and replied: "No."

Dilag managed to secure an acquittal for the first set of accused in the "Vizconde massacre" case in the 1990s.

Suspected of being members of a gang of cat burglars, the accused turned out to be fall guys, he said.

Dilag also worked for the conviction of a Chinese-Filipino couple who threw a baby out a window.

In the case of Maricris Sioson, a Filipino contract worker who died in Japan in 1991, he proved that there was no foul play in her death.

Dilag said a Filipino promotions agency had hired him to defend the Japanese man accused of killing Sioson. The man was acquitted after Dilag proved that Sioson had died of hepatitis.

OLONGAPO City Judge Renato Dilag, who will try the four American Marines on rape charges, insists on local custody of the accused. PDI PHOTO

Odd jobs

A native of Zambales, Dilag said he did odd jobs to support himself through college and law school.

His court now handles an average of 40 cases a month, or six cases every Tuesday and Friday.

Because the rape case against the US soldiers had landed in his court, "all other cases [here] will have to wait," he said, adding:

"I'm sure that the other cases will suffer."

But Dilag said he would treat the case "as an ordinary rape case."

Nevertheless, "I know the rest of the world is watching," he said. "I'm [being] extra careful about this."

Judge to demand custody . . .

From page A1

Olongapo prosecutor's office served subpoenas on the original six respondents for the preliminary investigation.

As to what will happen afterward, "we can't speculate," the official told the INQUIRER. "That's something you will have to ask the US Embassy."

The four Marines have been "detailed" with the Joint US Military Assistance Group in the US Embassy compound since their indictment.

National interest

In Manila, Justice Secretary Gonzalez said Malacañang would choose national interest over its relations with the United States, but only after all diplomatic means had been exhausted.

"There is no other way but to discuss this through the diplomatic process. Otherwise, what will you do? Declare war?" a wide-eyed Gonzalez said in an ambush interview at the Palace.

Gonzalez admitted that the rape case had forced the government to grapple with the dilemma of meeting the public sentiment of getting custody of the Americans while maintaining smooth ties with Washington.

But when the issue comes to a head, he said, "I will choose the interest of the Philippines. We have to see to it that national interest and national dignity are protected."

He insisted, however, that "it must first be done through diplomacy because you cannot abrogate [the VFA] without six months' advance notice."

The case has ignited calls for the government to revoke or amend the treaty.

But Gonzalez said: "There is a principle in international law which says that when you have a treaty, you must comply with it. But when the treaty has undergone certain processes that [make compliance] untenable for a party, that party can always withdraw from the treaty."

As to the option to review the VFA, Gonzalez said it would be "the call" of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

But until the treaty is revoked or the Supreme Court pronounces it unconstitutional, the government has to adhere to its provisions, Gonzalez said.

Motions for review

Dilag said the filing of separate motions by the lawyers of Staff Sgt. Chad Brian Carpentier and Lance Corporals Daniel Smith, Keith Silkwood and Dominic Duplantis and their driver, Timoteo Soriano Jr., would not stop him from seeking custody.

He said he had set the hearing of the motions on Friday.

The motions were filed in an effort to seek petitions for review of the Dec. 27 resolution before the Department of Justice, according to Carpentier's lawyer Francisco Rodrigo.

The resolution was issued by Olongapo Prosecutor Prudencio Jalandoni and Assistant Prosecutor Raymond Viray at the end of the preliminary investigation.

The custody issue cropped up on Nov. 3 when inquest investigators failed to take custody of the Americans.

US Embassy representatives took custody before the soldiers could board their ship, the USS Essex, for Okinawa, Japan.

The soldiers, who had participated in a two-week military exercise in Luzon, were on a rest-and-recreation break at the time of the alleged rape.

Case raffle

Undersecretary Zosimo Paredes, executive director of the Presidential Commission on the VFA (VFACom), witnessed the raffle of the case to Dilag's court.

At a press briefing later with Dilag, Paredes confirmed that it was the mandate of the VFACom "to see to it that the case will run its course without undue delay."

But INQUIRER sources at the DOJ in Olongapo said there was a legal procedural error in the raffle.

According to a source, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisal, Dilag should not have taken part in the raffle because he is a special family court judge. *(See related story on Page A1.)*

The source said the Family Courts Act of 1997 of the Revised Rules of Court in the Philippines identified only 11 cases over which the family courts should have exclusive original jurisdiction.

The 11 do not include rape cases that are not incestuous in character, or those with family members as victims and/or suspects.

Another source, a lawyer, attested that Dilag had never taken part in past raffles since his assignment in 2001 to the Regional Trial Court Branch 73, "a court of special jurisdiction designated by the Supreme Court to handle only family cases."

"While the Revised Rules of Court are silent on prohibition, Supreme Court Administrative Order No. 104-96 of Oct. 21, 1996, explicitly states that executive judges of the [RTCs] shall exclude designated special courts from the raffle of other cases, criminal and civil, whenever in their [executive judge's] judgment the case load of these courts shall prevent them from conducting a daily trial of the special cases," the lawyer said.

But when asked if he was barred from handling the rape case by virtue of his being a special family court judge, Dilag said: "No."

Defense

The lawyers of the Americans and of Soriano are determined to stop the arrest of their clients.

Yesterday, Smith's lawyer Benjamin Formoso filed a motion for judicial determination of probable cause.

Rodrigo and John Coluso, lawyers for Carpentier and for Silkwood and Duplantis, respectively, filed motions to defer the proceedings.

Jose Raulito Paras, lawyer for Soriano, filed three motions to quash the information of charges, judicial determination of probable cause and deferment of the issuance of warrant of arrest.

Paras said Soriano was "never accused of the commission of any offense in the complaint dated Nov. 3, 2005, and was neither the unidentified John Doe being referred to in the same complaint."

"There being no complaint against him, no government agency or officer has the authority to summon and require him to submit a counter-affidavit to a non-existent charge, much less unilaterally include him as a respondent in the preliminary investigation," Paras said.

Restrain them

Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco, an administration lawmaker, said Malacañang should restrain officials from issuing statements contradicting the Philippine stand that it should have custody of the four US Marines.

Cuenco, chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, named Gonzalez, Paredes and Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rafael Seguis as making "reckless and improper statements."

He said these officials should "shut up and refrain from issuing any pronouncement that could be mistaken as 'lawyering for the Americans' and furthermore, one that may just derail the government's task in taking custody of the accused."

Cuenco suggested that Malacañang appoint Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye or Gabriel Claudio, the President's adviser on political affairs, as the government spokesperson on the case.

Amend VFA

On the other hand, Senate President Franklin Drilon proposed that the government consider amending the VFA in view of the US silence on the Philippines' "pending request" for custody of the soldiers. That request is dated Nov. 16.

"I believe that this is an opportunity for the DFA and the Office of the President to take a good look at the [treaty] in order to fine-tune and amend [it] given the situation we are in today," he said at a briefing.

Asked what provision should be amended, Drilon said: "The question of the automatic custody of the American authorities, even if the offense has nothing to do with the [soldiers'] official duties."

Sen. Richard Gordon said the United States should turn over the four accused to the jurisdiction of the Philippines if it valued its long-standing relations with the latter.

He said Washington's refusal to yield jurisdiction was a sign of its "very limited respect" for Philippine laws. *With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., TJ Burgonio, Philip C. Tubeza and Volt Contreras in Manila; Ansbert Joaquin, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Corrections

YESTERDAY's story on Page A16—"Year of the Dog off to fiery start"—said that "Only two days into the New Year, dubbed as the Year of the Fire Dog in the Chinese calendar..." The Year of the Dog in the Chinese calendar starts on Jan. 29, not on Jan. 1.

* * *

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DOJ files estafa raps vs Ilusorio lawyer over ₱67-M attorney's fees

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice yesterday ordered the filing of estafa charges against a lawyer of the late Potenciano Ilusorio, a crony of strongman Ferdinand Marcos, after the lawyer allegedly duped two of his law partners of P67.59 million in attorney's fees.

The DOJ order against Luis K. Lokin Jr. came barely a month after the Supreme Court ordered the lawyer suspended for three months for allegedly double-crossing Ilusorio in the corporate battle for control of millions of shares in Philippine Communications Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat).

A junior law partner, Salvador C. Hizon, was charged along with Lokin.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, in a resolution denying the separate motions for reconsideration filed by Lokin and Hizon, said "there is probable cause to warrant the filing of an information for estafa [for] the deliberate refusal of respondents to give complainants their share [of] attorney's fees of P33,793,916.68 each, which is a clear breach of relation of trust and confidence."

The case stemmed from an agreement between Aerocom Investors & Managers Inc. and the law firm of Raval, Suplico and Lokin, which Aerocom hired in February 1994 to recover the firm's sequestered shares, including accrued cash dividends, in several companies.

In their joint affidavit-complaint, Demaree J.B. Raval and Rolex T. Suplico, Lokin's senior partners, said Aerocom committed to pay the law firm attorney's fees equivalent to 40 percent of any amount they might recover. Suplico is also the congressman of the fifth district of Iloilo. *Armand N. Nocum*

Japanese firm buying into PLDT

THE GOOD NEWS seems to be pouring in early in 2006 for President Macapagal-Arroyo who revealed yesterday the plan of Japan's biggest mobile service provider, NTT DoCoMo, to pump $300 million into Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT).

In a news program aired from Malacañang, the President said: "I want to announce what PLDT chair Manny Pangilinan told me – that NTT DoCoMo will put in $300 million into PLDT."

The announcement preempted PLDT's disclosure of the investment to the Philippine Stock Exchange. Disclosure is necessary to prevent the possibility of insider trading in PLDT shares.

The President noted that NTT's investment came on the heels of a P3-billion cash infusion by the Indonesian conglomerate, Lippo Group, into its local banking unit, Export Industry Bank.

"We are seeing a lot of investments coming into the country every day and we hope that this will continue throughout the year," Ms Arroyo said. *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

PAF graft, unrest bared

From page A1

of PAF Personnel Office in 2004 went.

Daquil, wearing the blue uniform of the PAF, seemed nervous at first and admitted to reporters that it was his first time to face the media.

"I want to air my frustrations. I'm sick and tired of the malpractice. I am not accusing the CGPAF of corruption. I just want him to explain where the money (P30 million) went. I have no idea where they used it," the 54-year-old Daguil said at a press conference.

Department of Budget regulations require that "personnel services funds cannot be diverted to any object class," he said.

Daquil explained that the savings came from the salaries of soldiers who either had gone AWOL (absent without official leave), resigned or taken early retirement.

. Daquil said Col. Alexander Flores of PAF logistics brought the papers to his office "and had me sign the concurrence (for the release)."

"When Colonel Flores approached me and said CG needed money and I was the only one with savings, they asked me if they could use the amount. I said that if the purpose was good and if the purpose was for the people, then I was OK with it. He (Flores) said it was for the people so I concurred," Daquil said.

PMA Class of 1976

A member of Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class of 1976, Daquil said that after the Oakwood mutiny in 2003, he thought that unauthorized allowances for star officers would be abolished.

He revealed that deputy wing commanders like himself received only an additional allowance of P8,500 a month. "It's illegal. I'm receiving a P8,500 additional allowance, which I kept in a bank. I cannot touch it and if the CGPAF will require me to return it by tomorrow I can.

"I hope all these concerned officers will be brave enough to admit it because telling the truth is the only way that we can implement changes in the Armed Forces."

Not for liquidation

Asked if Reyes could also be receiving the same big allowance, Daquil said: "If wing commanders receive the allowance, how much more the CGPAF."

He said he did not know what the additional allowance was for. "It's not for liquidation. It's not in the budget appropriation. It's not in the payslip. CGPAF authorized it and it came from the PAF comptroller. I signed a receipt but it was only in a journal," Daquil said.

The average foot soldier fighting in the frontlines receives a combat allowance of P240 a month.

Coup

Daquil also said that he was approached thrice by so-called "rebels" who invited him to join a coup, the last time in September. But he said that while he had grievances, he still wanted a peaceful avenue to air his grievances.

"Yes, I was approached by some rebel groups and I ignored them. In fact, when I was approached I immediately told the CGPAF that I was being recruited by the rebels. He said 'Just let them be and ignore them.' That's it."

He said talking to the media was a peaceful means to effect change.

"If I join a coup, I might get killed. There are those who are disgruntled. They just don't want to come out. I hope there will be others who will come out. This is the most opportune time considering our political situation. There must be change in the system, not exactly the leadership," he said.

All accounted for

The PAF spokesperson told reporters that the P30 million in savings went to the DBM. "The amount is all accounted for and there are records."

Asked what the amount was used for, Padilla said he would have to consult PAF records for the answer.

On the "illegal" allowances, Padilla said there was no "irregularity."

"It's part of the officers' MOE (maintenance and operating expenses). That goes to the maintenance of their offices like buying office paper and supplies. Sometimes they (senior officers) travel. As commanders, they go places and meet people," he said.

Padilla warned that the Air Force command would take action against Daquil for making his statements. "For having given those statements to the media and breaking the chain of command, he (Daquil) will be charged accordingly."

Relieved for no reason

Daquil said he was relieved on Dec. 10 "for no reason." He is now on floating status.

"I talked to the CG and he said it (Daquil's relief) was for my own good. He said the environment is bad," he said.

Padilla said Daquil's statements were just sour grapes. "He was given the position as deputy of the 2nd Tactical Operations Wing based in Mactan. But that was not his choice. He wanted to become commander."

Daquil also said the "bata-bata" (favoritism) system in the PAF was still very much alive. "There are officers who jump above more senior officers. To say that the Board of Senior Officers has a say in the appointments is false. The CGPAF is dictating who will be positioned. These were the same complaints of the Oakwood rebels."

On the chain of command, Daquil said "you know there are advantages and disadvantages to the chain of command. In the military, when you say chain of command you just follow the orders and complain later.

"The CGPAF can always say 'Why are you asking me this?' Do I have the heart to ask him that?"

He has not heard of any case that has been resolved by the so-called "grievance mechanism" in the Armed Forces, according to Daquil.

He said he had no intention of making general. "I don't want to be a general because I will be powerful and I will be corrupt."

In a statement, the PAF said Daquil's allegation of favoritism in AFP promotions and designations was "unfounded as the command strictly adheres to AFP regulations on the promotion system and all designations pass through a board of senior officers where personal merit and performance are the primary criteria.

Daquil is the latest in a line of military officers who brought complaints about the military before journalists, then were charged and detained.

The 117,000-strong military has been struggling with restiveness and has a recent history of uprisings. It played key roles in the ouster of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 and President Joseph Estrada in 2001. *With a report from AP*

What's cooking? Ramos, Drilon, Sotto meet in secret

From page A1

that they were forming an alliance.

A source told the INQUIRER that resolving the lingering political crisis, which continues to bedevil the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo, was the focus of the discussion.

"Look, there's no denying that the three have shadows (of political groups). There's something under their skin," said the source, stressing that Drilon represented former President Corazon Aquino, the Hyatt 10 and the Liberal Party, while Ramos was identified with Ms Arroyo, or at least the ruling Lakas-CMD party.

Aquino, Drilon, the Hyatt 10—a group of Cabinet officials who stepped down on July 8, 2005—called on Ms Arroyo to resign that same day.

While she has survived the worst political crisis of her political life, Ms Arroyo has yet to hurdle the tough task of putting to rest questions of her legitimacy, spawned by allegations that she stole the presidency in 2004.

Drilon yesterday admitted that he met with Ramos and Sotto, a friend of detained President Joseph Estrada's and of the late actor Fernando Poe Jr.'s, somewhere private on Jan. 2, but declined to divulge the agenda of the meeting.

"I confirm that former Senator Sotto, former President Fidel Ramos and I exchanged New Year pleasantries," Drilon said when asked by a reporter about his meeting with Ramos and Sotto.

Drilon was being eyed as "acting President" in a transition government by a multisectoral group that would take over the Arroyo administration. Asked if Ramos made an enticing offer, he said: "We exchanged toasts over red wine."

He stopped short of divulging the topic of the meeting.

"It is better to ask President Ramos. I'm not free to divulge it and I have no permission from President Ramos to divulge what we talked about," Drilon said.

"Out of respect for President Ramos, I do not want to make any comment in fairness to him. He is a senior statesman of our country and it is not appropriate for the Senate President to talk about what we talked about."

Malacañang dismissed the meeting as just an "innocuous New Year's call."

"We are not worried at all. Ramos is Lakas chair emeritus," said presidential political adviser Gabriel Claudio. "A high level of mutual respect, understanding and support exists between him and the President."

"We're in touch with him," said Claudio, even though he and other Malacañang officials were caught flatfooted by the meeting.

Ramos refused to talk to the media about the meeting.

"*Masakit daw ang ngipin* (He has a toothache)," Ed Malay, Ramos' spokesperson, said after relaying the INQUIRER's request for an interview to the former President.

Household staff said it was simply Ramos' way of saying "no comment."

The former President's declaration of support for Ms Arroyo in July was regarded as a key factor that saved her administration from collapse amid mounting calls for her resignation.

Ramos had proposed that the Constitution be amended to pave the way for a shift to a parliamentary system.

But two weeks ago, Ramos rejected as a "monumental blunder" a proposal by the Malacañang-constituted Consultative Commission to scrap elections in 2007. He threatened to withdraw support from Ms Arroyo unless she declared by New Year's Day that she was against the move.

Sotto also confirmed the meeting in Makati City but did not elaborate.

"Frank (Drilon) admitted it, so I guess I can't deny it any longer," he said.

Asked about the agenda of the meeting, or what they had achieved, Sotto said: "I'm not at liberty to say at this point. I'm not authorized to say what we talked about, or whether we agreed on something."

He said what was clear was that "we agreed not to talk about it in public just yet." *With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Crime rate down—DILG; victims don't complain—poll

From page A1

chief of Quezon City's anti-carnapping (Ancar) unit, taking his belongings, including his gun.

The theft came as the Department of Interior and Local Government reported declines in cases of car theft, bank heist, highway robbery, hijacking, street crime and illegal gambling from January to November of 2005 compared to the same period in 2004.

The declines could be attributed to the unwillingness of Filipinos to report crimes against them.

A survey said eight of every 10 people in the country failed to report crimes committed against them.

Of the 180 people who said they had been victimized in recent months, 82 percent said they did not report the crime to authorities, Pulse Asia said.

It found that 15 percent had been victims of crime, and that 54 percent of those said they had been victims of a burglary, by far the most widespread crime.

The survey did not say why so many victims did not bother to report the crimes.

The survey of 1,200 people had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Supt. Ceasar Tannagan, 38, told the police he was having lunch with a friend between 1 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. when unidentified men broke one of his car's windows.

He had parked his Toyota Corolla in front of 156 Maginhawa St. in Quezon City, he said.

The thieves took Tannagan's personal firearm, a .45-cal. pistol, his ATM and credit cards and driver's license, he told police.

Tannagan used to head the Ancar unit of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) until he was relieved late last year for an unspecified reason.

His term had been marked by an increase in car thefts in the city, especially of cars being taken from their owners at gunpoint, or "carjackings."

Tannagan, however, remains a member of the city's task force against car theft headed by Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao Jr., according to QCPD director Chief Supt. Nicasio Radovan Jr.

A report on crime incidence compiled by the DILG and the National Anti-Crime Task Force showed the number of car thefts nationwide decreased 34 percent, with only 945 cases reported in January-November last year compared with 1,440 during the same period in 2004.

For that period in 2005, 454 stolen vehicles were recovered, five car theft syndicates were neutralized, 136 people were arrested and 99 car theft cases were filed in court.

It was also the same year that members of the Traffic Management Group killed in the Ortigas area in Pasig City three scions of well-to-do families allegedly involved in carjacking.

"These figures point to one thing: The police, with the strong backing of the community, are slowly winning the war against criminality, toward making our society and streets peaceful and crime-free," Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes said.

Reyes had been assigned by President Macapagal-Arroyo to lead the National Anti-Crime Task Force (Nactaf). *With a report from AFP*

Pork barrel: Pigging out

From page A1

were the result of a meeting that month between a member of the House of Representatives and three INQUIRER editors. The meeting at a nightspot in Quezon City was largely a social occasion among old friends wanting to catch up on one another's lives.

When the conversation turned to the subject of the items in the national budget that pertained to the pet projects of lawmakers, that is, the pork barrel, the congressman was quite happy to disclose the money trail.

Taking hold of a paper napkin, the lawmaker, who will continue to remain unnamed, illustrated exactly how much, in the form of "standard" amounts, the members of Congress and other officials got from government projects funded with the pork barrel.

He said the kickbacks were "SOP"—standard operating practice—among legislators and ranged from a low of 19 percent to a high of 52 percent of the cost of each project, which could be anything from dredging, rip rapping, asphalting, concreting and construction of school buildings.

The other major sources of kickbacks that he identified were public funds intended for medicines and textbooks.

A few days later, the tale of the money trail became the banner story of the INQUIRER issue of Aug. 13, accompanied by an illustration of a roasted pig.

The great revolt

The drawing showed which choice portions of the pig went to a congressman, a senator, the head of the pre-qualification bidding and awards committee, and the resident local auditor.

The publication of the list would spark what could be called "the great pork barrel revolt" of 1996 in Congress as legislators realized that not all congressmen and senators were created equal—some got a bigger slice of the pork than others.

The pork barrel is a "hallowed" tradition in the history of the legislature in the country, dating back to the establishment of Congress itself. It is an accepted way by which legislators can be given access to public funds that they can distribute as largesse to their constituents.

The customary pork was known as the Countrywide Development Fund (CDF) in the budget. Each senator was allocated P18 million and each congressman P12.5 million.

A pig by any other name...

During the administration of President Fidel Ramos, the pork barrel system was expanded with the Congressional Initiative Allocation (CIA), under which funds were inserted in the budgets of government departments for projects in which legislators would have a say, giving them an additional source of pork.

The INQUIRER series was sparked by a July 22, 1996 story in which the chair of the Presidential Commission Against Graft and Corruption, Eufemio Domingo, denounced what he called the "criminal waste of hard-earned money by Congress through pork barrel appropriations amounting to P20 billion over the past eight years."

The issue would have died down as such stories are wont to. The issue of pork barrel irregularities were nothing new, after all.

But then the unnamed congressman decided to spill the beans and furnish the INQUIRER with the list of the kickback beneficiaries.

Worse than hell's fury

And the resulting ruckus in Congress stirred some members of the public into going to the INQUIRER with their own stories of irregularities in the implementation of the pork barrel-funded projects.

Hell hath no fury than a legislator denied his pork barrel. Unhappy about the share that they got, congressmen began turning on each other.

Several took to the House floor or went on radio to denounce the unfair allocations. Loyal administration congressmen felt insulted that their P21 million in CIA paled in comparison with the allocations for the most vociferous critics of President Ramos and House Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr.

The list showed that Minority Leader Ronaldo Zamora and Makati Rep. Joker Arroyo, for example, got P103 million and P38.1 million, respectively.

The then Deputy Speaker Hernando Perez said he could not accept that the late Rep. Rolando Andaya, who headed the appropriations committee, got P3.6 billion.

Pork even for relatives

Perez, who was allocated P76 million, said the fact that others got P100 million "makes me look like an idiot."

Iloilo Rep. Raul Gonzalez noted that some of the contractors for projects funded with pork barrel were relatives of congressmen or officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Others revealed that 23 construction firms were owned by House members or their close relatives.

The House was in crisis. De Venecia suspended the session one afternoon to prevent a free-for-all.

The Speaker then called a caucus where he promised to resolve the matter by giving the rebellious representatives more pork, averting a threat to declare all House positions vacant.

Who was Deep Throat?

Speculation on the source of the INQUIRER kickbacks list was so intense that on Aug. 12, two congressmen from Samar fought on the House floor, one of them accusing the other of being the source of the INQUIRER story.

Various congressmen demanded an investigation to find out who leaked the list to the INQUIRER.

Congressmen suspected Sen. Edgardo Angara of leaking the list. Sen. Ernesto Maceda delivered a privilege speech blaming the "ignorant media" for the "demolition job versus the entire Congress."

The INQUIRER decided to come out with a story on the source of the list. It turned out to be a Department of Budget and Management official who was so exasperated with the floods in his area that he gave the list to the INQUIRER's congressman source in the hope that it would result in a more equitable sharing of the CIA and free up funds for flood mitigation and control.

P1-B libel suit

With the public pressure, the DBM would confirm that the list was authentic.

In mid-August, De Venecia declared that the House would file a P1-billion libel suit against the INQUIRER.

Gonzalez upped the ante by announcing that the House would have the INQUIRER offices "padlocked" on the grounds that its series on the pork barrel was seditious.

The threats boomeranged on Congress. Church people, local government organizations, school officials, children and media groups flooded the INQUIRER with calls, fax messages and mail, expressing outrage against the pork barrel and promising support for the paper.

House retreats

Children sent their savings to help the INQUIRER defray the cost of fighting a libel suit, and people sent leads for stories, documents and pictures of cases of pork barrel misuse.

Rather than be cowed, the INQUIRER went on to publish the entire CIA list, starting on Aug. 15.

Amid the public outrage, the House dropped its plan to sue the INQUIRER.

Did the kickbacks stop because of the INQUIRER series? Most likely, it did not.

But the series has led to reforms in the pork barrel system.

No more basketball courts

In 2001, the DBM started posting on its website the list of pork barrel projects that congressmen and senators had identified for funding. It also issued a memorandum circular disallowing projects like basketball courts and waiting sheds.

During the 12th Congress in 2001, the pork barrel was renamed the Priority Development Assistance Fund, which was limited to funding "hard projects" like roads, bridges, hospitals and day care centers, and "soft projects" like support for the Department of Social Welfare and Development and procurement of seeds.

Some legislators completely gave up their pork barrel.

Police colonel denies hand in Gingoyon murder

By Luige A. del Puerto

INVOKING GOD AND AT TIMES RAISING his voice to emphasize a point, a senior police officer whose name had cropped up in the investigation into the killing of Judge Henrick Gingoyon yesterday swore he had nothing to do with the murder.

While admitting he had had past disputes with Gingoyon, Senior Supt. Manuel Barcena said his battles with the judge were confined to the courtroom.

The battles were never personal, he said, although Barcena admitted his legal troubles affected his career and caused him to be investigated for dishonesty by his own organization.

Barcena said he could never think of having the judge killed, especially now that the Supreme Court had decided in his favor and he had just been recently promoted to senior superintendent.

"My previous disputes with Judge Gingoyon were purely legal in nature and entirely related to the performance of my duties as a police officer," Barcena said.

The officer's tiffs with the slain judge stemmed from a drug case in 1998, when he was head of the National Capital Region Police Office-Drug Enforcement Unit. His team arrested two men in a buy-bust operation and seized two cars from them.

The police filed a case against the suspects. Judge Gingoyon tried the case. The suspects were acquitted.

Egged on by Barcena, the prosecutor's office appealed the case.

The Supreme Court later ruled that Gingoyon had erred in "giving due course to the prosecution's notice of appeal."

"The prosecution cannot appeal as it would place the accused in double jeopardy," the SC said.

As a result of the case's dismissal, the national police investigated Barcena for dishonesty. He was placed on floating status for several months. The dishonesty case was later dismissed, he said.

Barcena and the judge had had other encounters.

In March 12, 2002, Gingoyon's house was shot at by assailants in a maroon car. The judge blamed Barcena, and in his affidavit stated that Barcena was "the only person whom I could say had a grudge against me."

Yesterday, Barcena maintained that the supposed affidavit was unsigned, and added that the National Bureau of Investigation had already cleared him of involvement in the case.

9 suspects held but no brains yet

From page A1

Lomibao, police said they had also arrested a certain Danny and a certain Hadji, who supposedly handed over P150,000 to Cruer as payment for killing Gingoyon, who was gunned down near his home in Bacoor, Cavite, at around noon last Saturday.

Police declined to present the suspects to the media pending the filing of charges against them.

But Chief Supt. Jesus Verzosa, Calabarzon police director, maintained that Ignacio and Arciaga "were just invited for questioning."

Of the seven, he said only Cruer, Baclor, Rabino and Samonte "had direct participation in the killing."

Some of the suspects acted as lookouts, he said.

Lomibao said investigators were not considering the case as solved.

"As of now, this is the strongest lead that we are pursuing although we are not discounting other leads ... We cannot say that this case is solved as of yet," Lomibao said.

Tip from informants

Verzosa said the arrests were prompted by information that the killing was carried out by members of a crime group based in Cavite.

He said the group was involved in kidnap-for-ransom, robbery and gun-for-hire activities.

Acting on the tip, six teams fanned out in a series of operations, which started on Monday night and ended early Tuesday.

Verzosa said that after witnesses named Cruer as the gunman, police swooped down on the house of the suspect in Greenvalley Subdivision in Barangay Molino and arrested him at around 8 p.m.

Cruer allegedly identified his cohorts in two other subdivisions in Molino. The last to be arrested was Baclor, from his house also in Greenvalley.

Where murder was plotted

Verzosa said it was in Baclor's house where the group allegedly met and planned the ambush-slaying of Gingoyon.

Lomibao said police had yet to ascertain the motive for the killing of Gingoyon.

"We cannot say what the motive was unless we talk with the men who handed Cruer the money. It is only they who can (tell us who wanted Gingoyon killed)," he said.

Asked if Senior Supt. Manuel Barcena, who had been involved in legal disputes with the judge, was already off the hook, Lomibao said: "We are not discounting other angles in the case. I have asked (the investigators) to invite (Barcena)."

Relatives of the suspects assailed the police for the supposed illegal arrests of their loved ones.

"They said they would only invite my brother. Now they are accusing him of killing. My brother knows nothing about it. He is not a bad man," cried Rosemarie Baclor.

A hysterical Jessie Rabino, 42, said her husband was framed by their neighbors who were police informants.

She said the neighbors were just envious of their business.

But Verzosa said police were firm that they had arrested the right persons.

"We are 90 percent sure that these men were involved in the killing because we have witnesses who saw them," he said. "We will just file the case and they will have their chance to prove us wrong in court."

When asked about the allegations that the suspects were fall guys, Verzosa replied, "It is a normal reaction of the relatives of criminals."

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said one of the suspects "has already confessed his participation."

Wider conspiracy

He said authorities were looking at a "wider conspiracy" involving a police officer whom he did not name.

"Things are pointing to an incident in 2002 where the judge had figured in an altercation with a police official which was also followed by a strafing of the house of the judge," Gonzalez said.

"According to the investigators, the suspects were contracted for P150,000," NBI officer in charge Nestor Mantaring said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo congratulated Gonzalez and the authorities for "ensuring no coverup or foot dragging in the case."

Gonzalez said the arrest of the suspects did not solve the crime "because you have to find out who is the mastermind."

Gonzalez said one of those in custody, who had acted as a lookout, had been identified "as the one who contacted and contracted the others for the mission to kill the judge."

"He is the one who knows the mastermind. He knows where the money came from," Gonzalez said.

Mantaring theorized that the mastermind could be an affluent person. *With a report from Margaux Ortiz, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Top 'Pook' awards go to Bohol, Or. Negros

From page A1

Bohol Gov. Erico B. Aumentado told the INQUIRER that these programs succeeded because of the support of the people.

In the coastal management program, for instance, Aumentado said fishermen who used to hunt dolphins and whales and were engaged in illegal fishing were called to meetings where they were informed that they needed to keep the marine resources alive to ensure their income in the future.

"Now, they are the guardians of the marine resources. From hunters, they have become the protectors," Aumentado said.

Coastal management ties in with Bohol's massive eco-tourism campaign, which has resulted in a dramatic increase in tourist arrivals from 95,420 in 2001 to over 313,585 in 2004.

"We are now working on building more rooms and improving our tourism facilities, such as restaurants and transportation," he said.

No longer the poorest

According to Aumentado, Bohol is no longer one of the 20 poorest provinces in the Philippines because of these programs. It is now ranked 41st out of 79 provinces, and the people plan to further improve Bohol's ranking this year.

He attributed Bohol's increasing prosperity to the collaboration between the local government, the military and the people.

"We also have to thank the One above who continues to help Bohol," Aumentado said, "It helps that we have always been a prayerful, conservative people."

Growing vegetables

Oriental Negros Gov. George P. Arnaiz, on the other hand, was particularly proud of the Gulayan at Palaisdaan Alay sa Kabataan (Vegetable Farm and Fish Pond) program, chosen as one of the top 10 outstanding local government programs for 2005.

The program was conceived in 2002 out of the need to improve nutrition among grade school children.

What better way to improve their health, he said, than to eat vegetables the kids raised themselves.

The children were given garden tools, fertilizers and vegetable seeds to be planted in unused lots in their schools. The local government also spent P2 million in the first year of the program training over 700 teachers all over the province in gardening.

Fighting malnutrition

In three years, the area devoted to vegetable production increased by 139.31 hectares, contributing 9.7 percent to the total vegetable area. Malnutrition decreased to 23 percent in 2005, down from 39 percent in 2002 and 27 percent in 2003.

"It is a very simple and cheap program that's simply going back to the basics," Arnaiz said in an interview, "We used to garden when we were young, but we forgot about it."

The program not only revived a dying activity, but also increased the income of schools since they could sell excess vegetables raised in their gardens.

"The spillover effect has been very good because the children also plant vegetables in their homes," he said. "And when you visit schools all over the province, you will see vegetables they are proud to have raised themselves thanks to the program."

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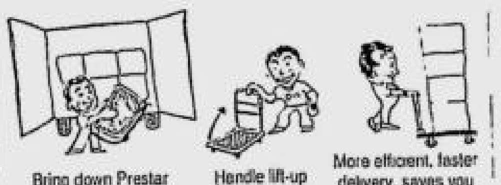

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Russia restores gas flow to Europe

MOSCOW—RUSSIA WAS ATTEMPTING TO RESTORE normal supplies of natural gas to European nations on Tuesday, but its politically-charged gas price row with Ukraine showed no signs of abating.

Several European nations felt the chilling effects Monday of Kiev's gas price row with Moscow which has turned off its natural gas supply to Ukraine, through which Russian gas also transits on its way to Europe.

With key importers such as Germany and France reporting a drop in supplies, Russian energy giant Gazprom promised to increase exports westward to make up the gap.

"We have taken all necessary measures to supply Europe with gas according to contracts," Gazprom's deputy chair Alexander Medvedev was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

"By tomorrow evening full supply to Europe in accordance with these contracts will be restored," he added.

Gazprom said it would raise supplies in its export pipeline by 95 million cubic meters a day in order to make up for Ukraine "stealing" the natural gas bound for European countries further downstream.

Late Monday, Austria and Hungary separately reported that gas pressure had returned to normal levels on pipelines running from Ukraine.

Austrian Economic Minister Martin Bartenstein expressed satisfaction that Russian Gazprom had kept it promise to restore the supply.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko met Monday with ambassadors of the European Union, Japan and the United States to discuss the crisis and said Kiev would call for international experts and arbitration in the price dispute.

EU energy officials will hold a special meeting on Wednesday to discuss supplies.

Europe imports a quarter of its natural gas from Russia, with 90 percent of those supplies delivered via Ukraine.

The crisis has raised questions among Western officials and Moscow analysts about Europe's dependence on Russian imports, as well as about Russia's policies as it takes the helm of the G-8 group of leading industrialized nations in 2006.

Hungary had earlier noted a 40 percent drop in Russian gas, Poland almost as much and Austria 30 percent. Slovakia, Romania, Croatia also reported reductions.

In western Europe, Italy saw Russian supplies drop 24 percent and France—which gets 21 percent of its gas from Moscow—a fall of 25-30 percent.

Germany, Europe's biggest gas importer, also noted disruptions, although Economy Minister Michael Glos said there was no immediate cause for concern for the 17 million German households that use gas heating.

Britain which has it own, albeit dwindling, gas supplies, does not rely heavily on Russian gas imports.

The row erupted when Gazprom, which controls a third of global natural gas reserves, demanded an immediate rise in Soviet-era gas tariffs to Ukraine.

It wants to raise the price to Ukraine from $50 to $230 per 1,000 cubic meters, bringing it closer into line with market prices.

Supplies were cut Sunday after Kiev rejected the price hike.

Ukrainian Energy Minister Ivan Plachkov denied Russian allegations that Ukraine was siphoning off gas to ease its energy needs but warned it would be forced to do so if temperatures plunged below freezing.

As its 48 million people braced for shortages, Ukraine accused Moscow of seeking to destabilize its economy, which depends on Russia for about a third of its natural gas import needs. *AFP*

Saddam prefers to die by firing squad

WASHINGTON—JAILED FORMER IRAQI dictator Saddam Hussein told two of his lawyers that if he is sentenced to death for war crimes, he would rather die by firing squad than by hanging, The Washington Times said Tuesday.

"I don't value this life that much. Every human being has his time to go," lawyer Issam Ghazzawi said Saddam told him when they met in a basement of a Baghdad courthouse on Dec. 7 during a break in his trial.

Ghazzawi said he and former US attorney general Ramsey Clark raised the possibility that the former dictator might be sentenced to death if convicted of war crimes.

"I am the commander in chief... I prefer it to be by firing squad," Saddam answered, according to the lawyer, adding that it was "the right way" to execute a military leader.

SADDAM

The ousted Iraqi ruler, who is blamed for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people during his 25-year regime but is currently facing charges of ordering the 1982 massacre of 140 people, said he was innocent of the charges but pessimistic about his future.

"Of course I'm not guilty, but I know they want me dead," Saddam said. "Threatening me with death doesn't mean anything," he told the two lawyers. "I don't care less. The life of any one Iraqi is no less valuable than mine." During his five-hour meeting with Ghazzawi and Clark, Saddam also praised the insurgency, saying it had prevented US attempts to "formulate a new world." "They tried in Iraq and failed badly, so by standing against (US President George W.) Bush we are protecting other countries and regions of the world. Now the US will think a thousand times before daring to attack another country," he said, according to Ghazzawi.

Saddam also predicted that US occupation of Iraq would not last much longer.

"The Iraqi people are patriotic; they cannot accept foreign rule. Any aggression will be resisted to the end. *AFP*

RESCUE workers try find people under the collapsed roof of a skating rink in Bad Reichenhall, southern Germany, Tuesday, Jan. 3. AP

German skating rink collapses, 15 feared dead

BAD REICHENHALL, GERMANY—Up to 15 people, including children, were killed or feared dead after the roof of a skating rink in southern Germany collapsed in heavy snow, police and officials said on Tuesday.

Schools in the region were on holiday and many children and their parents were inside the building in the Bavarian town of Bad Reichenhall, by the Austrian border, when the roof, weighed down by masses of snow, fell in on Monday.

Rescuers worked through the night, lifting away half of the collapsed structure. By early morning they had identified the bodies of nine people—a woman, two teenagers and six children aged between nine and 12.

Hubertus Andrae, police director of the nearby town of Traunstein, told a news conference that six additional people were known to be buried in the wreckage and that another three were believed to be missing.

Relatives faced an agonizing wait as rescuers with sniffer dogs and heavy cranes worked in bitter cold through the night to clear masses of snow and debris but there were few signs of life coming from under the piles of rubble.

Police denied reports of knocking coming from under the collapsed roof.

"It's unfortunately deathly quiet in the hall," a spokesperson said.

Officials said around 50 people were thought to have been in the sports complex when the roof collapsed. Around 30 were injured and several others escaped from the collapse unscathed.

Relatives of the victims and missing were receiving counseling in a makeshift tent set up in front of the rink. Some were being taken around by police in small groups to view the hall. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Flash floods kill 57 in Indonesia

PANTI, Indonesia—Rescuers struggled to reach stranded villagers and recovered dozens more corpses on Tuesday as the death toll from flash flooding in central Indonesia reached 57, officials said. A group of crying survivors carried a dead baby wrapped in a blanket to a temporary clinic, and police hauled injured survivors on stretchers from destroyed villages in Jember district on the east of Java island, witnesses said. The local government scrambled to provide food, shelter and medicine to more than 5,400 people made homeless by the flooding, which was triggered by heavy weekend rains that sent mud, water and logs crashing into villages, destroying hundreds of buildings early Monday. Survivors were staying in schools, mosques and government buildings. *AP*

Israel's Likud ministers to quit gov't

TEL AVIV—Cabinet ministers from Israel's rightist Likud party will resign from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's cabinet this Sunday, party leader Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday. Netanyahu had pushed for the resignations of the four ministers so that the party could focus on campaigning for a March 28 election. Likud has been lagging in polls since Sharon quit to form a new centrist party, Kadima. The departure of the ministers is likely to have little impact for Sharon. *Reuters*

13 West Virginia miners trapped

CHARLESTON, West Virginia—Rescuers mounted a massive effort on Monday to reach 13 miners trapped just under two miles inside a West Virginia coal mine after an early morning explosion. The men became trapped inside the Sago mine in central West Virginia, about 160 km from Charleston, after an unexplained blast about 6:30 a.m. (1130 GMT) and rescue efforts have been hampered by high gas concentrations outside the mine. There had been no communication with the miners since. After ventilation fans dissipated the unidentified gas outside the mine, two teams of rescuers began advancing through the shaft to reach the men 114 meters below ground. *Reuters*

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UN Hariri probe wants to quiz Syrian president

BEIRUT—THE UN INQUIRY probing the murder of former Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri demanded Monday to interview Syrian president Bashar al-Assad after a former deputy implicated his regime in the assassination.

An inquiry spokesperson said UN investigators were also looking to talk to Foreign Minister Faruq Shara as well as former vice president Abdel Halim Khaddam, who made the explosive allegations after fleeing into exile in Paris.

"We asked to interview Assad, Shara and others. We are awaiting an answer (from the Syrian authorities)," said inquiry spokesperson Nasrat Hassan.

She added that the commission wanted to meet Khaddam "as soon as possible" after his comments in an interview with Al-Arabiya television in which he accused Assad of threatening Hariri just months before his murder.

"This is the immediate effect of Khaddam's bombshell as he was a pillar of the Syrian regime," said Lebanese political scientist Joseph Bahout. "Mr. Assad will find it difficult to refuse receiving the commission." The request for an interview presents Assad with yet another delicate choice—whether to risk losing face by being interrogated by UN investigators or take a stand and see his country slip into international isolation.

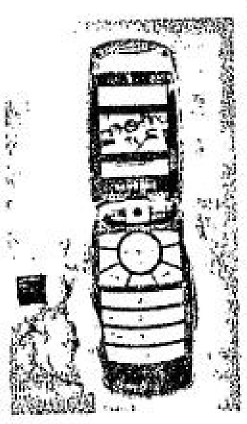
Khaddam quoted Assad as telling Hariri during a meeting in Damascus: "I will destroy anyone who tries to hinder our decisions." "We must await the results of the investigation, but no Syrian security service could take such a decision unilaterally," added Khaddam, long the architect of Syria's military and political domination of neighboring Lebanon.

According to the An-Nahar daily, Khaddam's declarations were "identical to the commission's conclusions." Simon Karam, a former Lebanese ambassador to the United States, told AFP that Khaddam's comments had given the inquiry a push forward at a time when its pace was stumbling due to Syria's "manipulations." Hariri's son and political heir Saad hailed Khaddam's comments as "historic testimony." Khaddam was slung out of the ruling Baath party for making the comments.

AFP

Samsung develops fastest downloading cellphone

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREA'S SAMSUNG Electronics Co. said Tuesday it had developed what it claims to be the world's fastest multimedia-downloading mobile handset.



The phone, equipped with an MSM6280 chip from the Qualcomm of the United States, enables users to download music or other multimedia content at a speed of 3.6 megabits per second, or approximately 10 MP3 music files a minute.

The mobile using "high-speed downlink packet access (HSDPA) technology," was unveiled at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the company said.

"Samsung is proud to showcase HSDPA as the future of mobile broadband," said Kitae Lee, president of Samsung's Telecommunications Network Business. The mobile, equipped with Qualcomms Mobile Station Modem, is a product of strategic collaboration between Samsung and the US company.

The new handset marks "an exceptionally important milestone in driving the commercialization and deployment of this technology worldwide," said Dr. Sanjay K. Jha, president of QUALCOMM CDMA Technologies.

AFP

Palestinians launch poll campaign

RAMALLAH, WEST Bank—Campaigning begins Tuesday for only the second Palestinian parliamentary election, with factions staging launch rallies despite major question marks hanging over whether the vote will take place.

The Fatah movement, which has governed the Palestinian Authority over the past decade, will try to put behind it all internal divisions at the launch of their campaign by the tomb of the late patriarch Yasser Arafat in Ramallah.

While Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas is on a tour of the Gulf states, deputy prime minister and Fatah campaign manager Nabil Shaath is expected to address supporters and many of the party's candidates running for office on Jan. 25, before holding a 1 p.m. (1100 GMT) press conference.

While Fatah will kick off its campaign in the West Bank, its chief rivals from Hamas will stage their own launch in their Gaza Strip stronghold.

Ismail Haniya, who tops the Islamists' list of candidates, is expected to address supporters outside the home of the movement's late founder.

AFP

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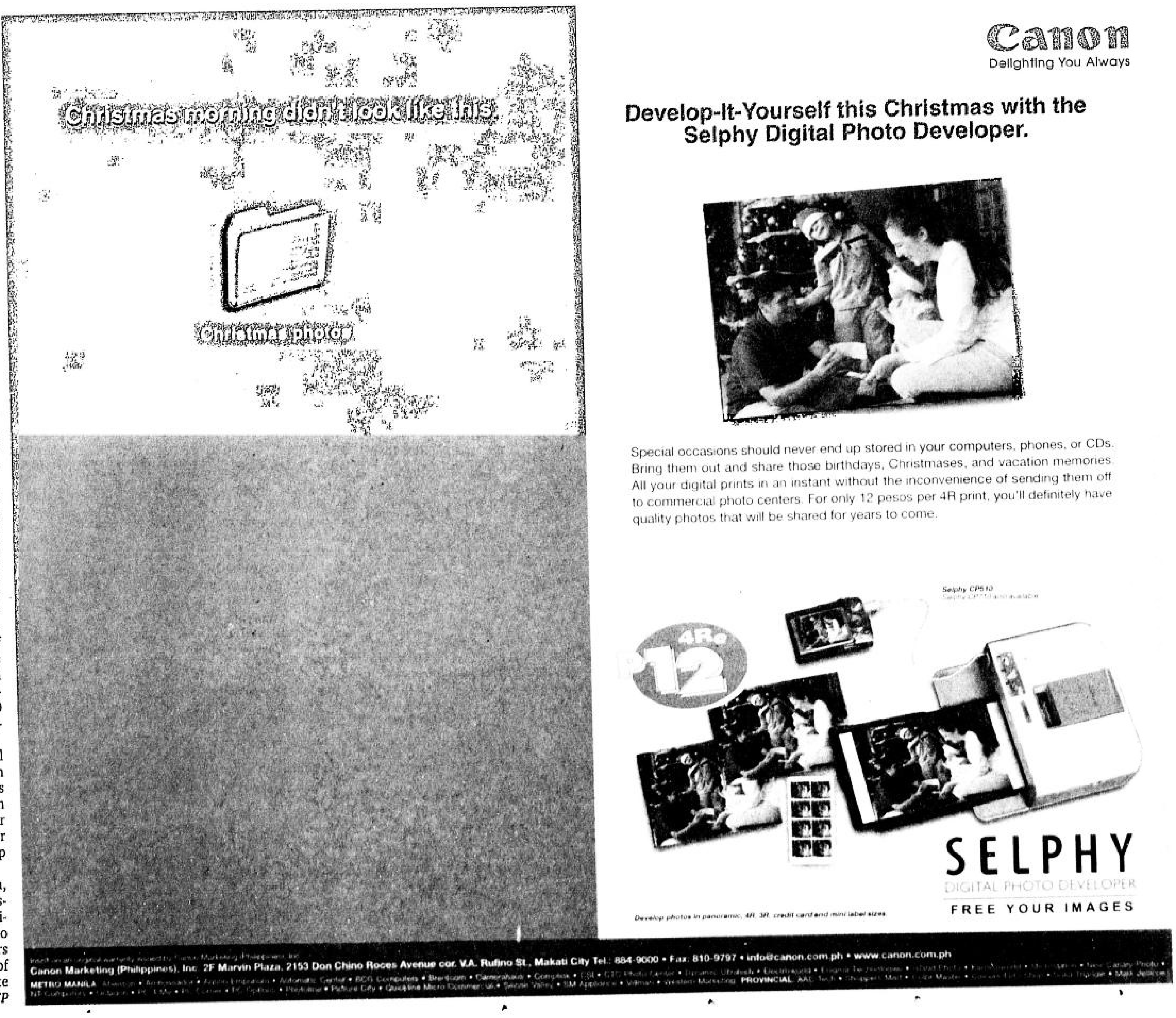
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OPINION

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Different tunes

EDITORIAL

THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF THE TALK-FIRST-think-later nature of our country's nonexistent foreign policy is the manner in which the justice and foreign affairs secretaries have contradicted each other. If our country had a genuine foreign policy, focused on the nation's permanent interests, we would not, so early in the year, have Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez publicly fretting about offending the United States, or Secretary Alberto Romulo publicly expressing the hope that Uncle Sam will, whatever happens, keep tenderly holding our hand. The two statements are simply two sides of the same coin, both showing a government incapable of conducting mature diplomacy.

The secretaries of justice and foreign affairs were, of course, referring to the question of whether the American servicemen accused of raping a Filipina in Subic Freeport should be detained by Filipinos or Americans. If we had a government with a foreign policy, the justice secretary would focus on matters affecting the law while the foreign secretary would assert the country's treaty rights. Instead we have the hyper-opinionated Gonzalez playing amateur diplomat and the holder of the diplomatic portfolio mobilizing the foreign service in aid of the country's position on the matter. Instead, we have a trio of Cabinet officials—Gonzalez, Romulo and Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye—singing different tunes.

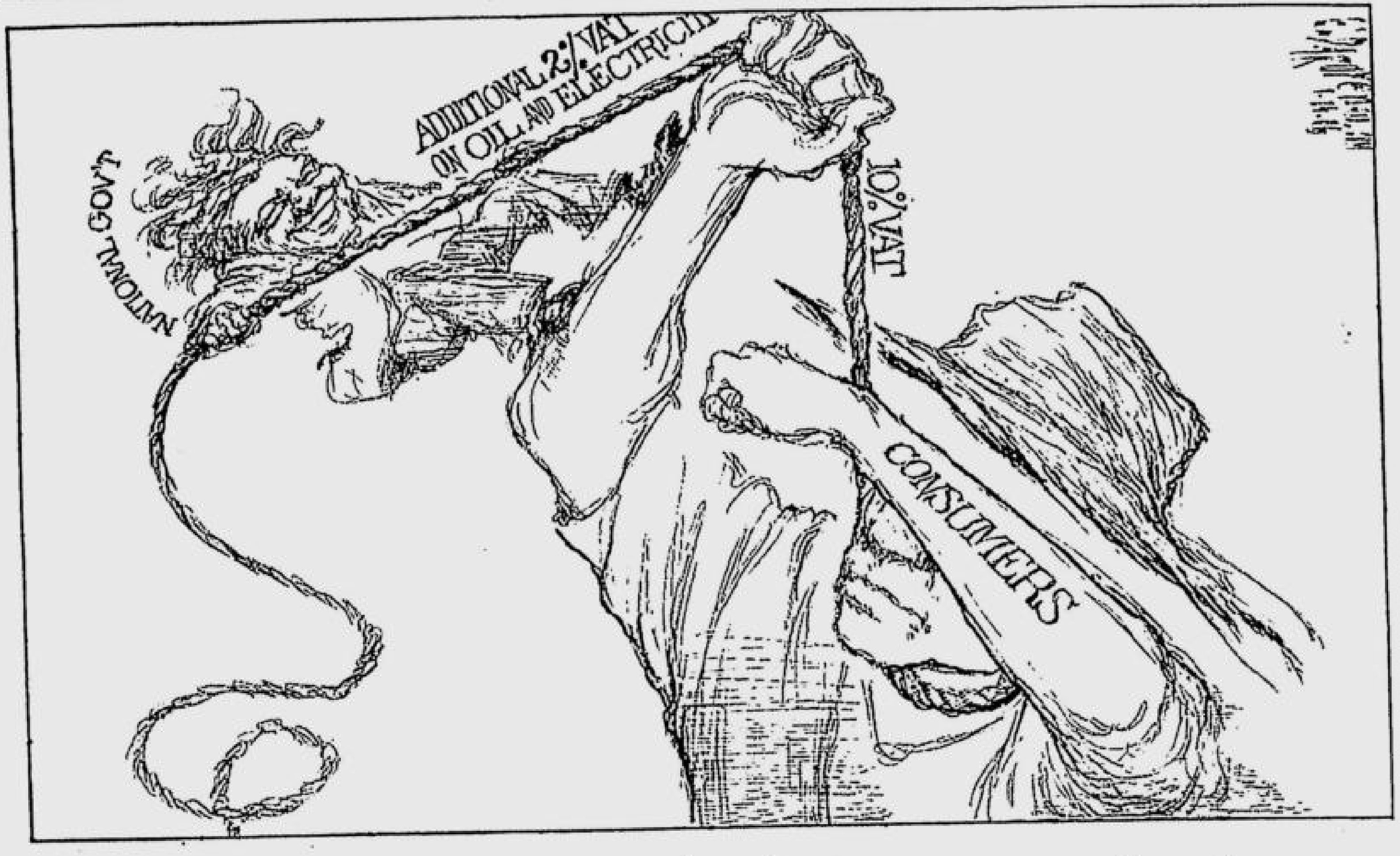
The Department of Foreign Affairs informed the United States that our government would be seeking custody over the accused American servicemen. This was on Nov. 16 last year. The Americans have yet to formally respond to the official notice. However, things can't just go on hold until the US government deigns to respond; as it is, the lead state prosecutor is preparing to file a motion in court seeking the transfer and detention in Olongapo of the four servicemen accused of rape. This is on the sensible principle that if Timoteo Soriano Jr., the Filipino driver involved in the case, was ordered arrested, so should the Americans.

Gonzalez has pointed out certain provisions of the Visiting Forces Agreement to show that the Philippines cannot simply order the arrest of the accused Americans. That is why the government filed a notice of intent with the US government. This is, again, on the sensible principle that foreign soldiers accused of a crime in another country deserve the protection of their government—so that they will be assured of a fair trial and accorded every opportunity to mount a credible defense.

However, there is a fine line between Gonzalez's pointing out the provisions of existing agreements, and his giving the impression that he is more concerned with helping Americans rather than ensuring that justice prevails for all concerned. Senate President Franklin Drilon pointed this out when he criticized Gonzalez's view that prior to an arrest, negotiations would have to be undertaken with the Americans. Saying that essentially telegraphs to the American side the soft nature of the government's will to assert itself. As Lord Palmerston's famous axiom puts it, nations have "no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests." Friendship is not the point; justice is.

Gonzalez's other legal observations are, when examined closely, not particularly controversial. His acerbic style and tendency to make smart-alecky comments in public, however, serve to inflame passions. This is well and good for a politician, but not for a justice secretary, and certainly it does not serve the interest of justice. This is because his statements only serve to complicate the issues, anger people and make the job of the DFA more difficult than it should be. No wonder some people are convinced Gonzalez is out to sabotage the case.

While we do not believe Gonzalez would sacrifice a case merely to pander to America, the law of unintended consequences is already kicking in, tainting the credibility of the government's effort. Neither justice nor diplomacy can be effective if handled in the manner the town drunk handles life: by sitting in front of the corner *sari-sari* store, commenting on anything and everything, heedless of common sense, decency or dignity.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Big fight over motor vehicle insurance business

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

ONE OF THE BIG FIGHTS SHAPING UP IN THE new year is that between the Insurance Commission and private insurance companies, on the one hand, and the Government Service Insurance System, on the other. Because of the exposé made by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile on the anomalies in the vehicle insurance system—specifically, the Compulsory Third Party Liability (CTPL) insurance for private vehicles—there are moves to change the system. The Insurance Commission and the GSIS have submitted different proposals. And that's the reason for the fight.

Tens of thousands of vehicle owners who have had accidents already know what Enrile exposed. Many insurance companies do not pay claims for indemnity by accident victims. In most cases, vehicle owners have no recourse but to pay from their own pockets because they have been sold fake insurance policies.

Moreover, many insurance firms did not pay taxes on the premiums paid. It is estimated that the government loses about P268 million yearly from unpaid taxes on premiums. Since the CTPL system has been in force for the last 25 years, revenue losses could run to billions of pesos.

To stop the anomaly, the GSIS has offered to be the issuer of CTPL coverage to private vehicles. Right now, it already does that for government vehicles.

That would be a monopoly, said the Insurance Commission and the private insurance companies. Instead the commission proposes a "clearing house" for the private insurance companies. To assure the payment of taxes, it proposes the payment of premiums through banks.

The GSIS says there would be no monopoly as it would reinsure with reputable private companies but the GSIS would take primary responsibility for the payment of claims. It assures that claims would be paid in 5 to 10 days. This is much better than a clearing house.

As for the payment of premiums through banks, that would add another step to the registration of vehicles that would inconvenience owners who would have to go to a bank to pay. They already have to go to a gas emission testing center, then to the office of an insurance company. The red tape is so long that owners are forced to pay fixers at the Land Transportation Office.

Moreover, 40 percent or almost half of the premiums will go to the "clearing house."

"Who are these unknown but powerful personalities in this 'clearing house' that they are favored to receive the huge 40 percent of the gross revenues from the CTPL?" the GSIS asks. This "clearing house," by the way, has not been registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission and the personalities pushing it are totally unknown. "For all we know," the GSIS adds, "they are the same personalities now operating the bogus CTPL system. Besides, none of these assures that the problems would be solved, as both the bank certificates and CTPLs could still be faked."

As a backgrounder to readers, this "clearing house" could be just the same dog with a different collar, the same "unified pooling system" created by Presidential Decree 1455 in 1978. It was composed of all insurance companies licensed to do casualty insurance and managed by representatives of the insurance industry. The CTPL coverage of all private vehicles was assigned to this pool while the coverage for government vehicles was assigned to the GSIS.

While the GSIS coverage was successful, that of the pool was not because of fraudulent practices by the member insurance companies in the pool as well as by the management group that supervised the pool. As a result, PD 1455 was replaced by PD 1814, which abolished the pool and limited the compulsory insurance coverage to third party bodily injury.

But the transfer of the issuance of CTPL policies to individual private insurance companies has resulted in the proliferation of fake policies and Certificates of Cover (COC) and also promoted unauthorized franchising. So in 2002, the LTO agreed to a program sponsored by the private sector providing for authentication of CTPL Certificates of Cover.

That program failed, too. Fake CTPL policies continued to circulate and government continued losing revenue due on the premiums. The reason is that the watchers in the CTPL game were also the players. Fly-by-night insurance firms sold blank COCs to some LTO registrars who resold them to vehicle owners at double or triple the price they paid for them. This is the present system that the two proposals seek to change.

The GSIS proposal looks like the better one. First, it would incorporate the payment of premiums for CTPL policies in the registration costs. The vehicle owner doesn't have to go to the office of an insurance company. Payment for the GSIS CTPL policy would be automatically incorporated in the LTO registration receipt through a separate item. This payment would also be encoded in LTO and GSIS computers. Claimants for CTPL indemnity need not submit proof of coverage. All the GSIS would have to do is punch its computer system which is linked with the LTO's to verify the CTPL coverage.

Second, it would ensure that the government receives the correct taxes from the premiums.

Third, it would protect the public from fake CTPL policies.

Fourth, it would ensure prompt payment of CTPL indemnity to motor vehicle accident victims.

Fifth, it would eliminate fixers and middlemen in the transaction, thus minimize corruption.

And last, it would provide additional dividends to the national government from the proceeds of the business.

Paths

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

ARCHBISHOP ANGEL LAGDAMEO, PRESIDENT of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, and Archbishop Oscar Cruz had two seemingly contradictory pieces of advice to give the nation on its new year.

For Lagdameo, change should start from within. "Our dream of a transforming and transformed nation must wake up to the realities that we are challenged to change. (There is need) to break with the old selfish ways of thinking and behaving which have been the causes of conflicts. (The task of) national transformation must be a shared one, something every concerned Filipino must initiate starting with himself."

For Cruz, the only way the new year can be new is "if there were new public leaders with a new vision and in command of new integrity and respectability. Otherwise, the year is but another date, merely prolonging old realities. (The most important question) is the legitimacy and competence of no less than the holder of the highest office of the country. Unless there is not only a legal but a real closure of this national and fundamental issue, looking at the new year as a truly new year with new realities is falsity."

Both in fact have a point.

Over the years I've gotten to appreciate more and more the need for internal, moral, spiritual changes as against external, political, and physical ones. I've gotten to a point where I truly believe, along with Lagdameo, that the second will not happen, or will not produce any lasting effects even when they do, without the first. We do not need to look very far to see the truth of it. There are the two Edsas to argue for it. Both were huge events, toppling down governments that seemed destined to last forever, promising the hope of a better world. Yet 20 years later (to the day next month), we are no better than when we started. We are worse.

We are a country that has lived out the story about the ogre that never dies. That story, for those who have never heard it, tells of an ogre that terrorizes a community and that somehow cannot be killed. Many brave men set out to destroy it but they never come back. One day, a strapping youth, bold and carefree, tries his luck. He gets to the ogre's castle, and surprisingly finds it the easiest thing in the world to defeat the ogre. But, alas, the story does not end happily. The youth doesn't come back either. That is because he becomes the ogre. That is the secret of the ogre that never dies.

And that is the secret of the country that never lives, which is us. The people who slay the ogres in this country become the ogres themselves, the people who topple the tyrants in this country become the tyrants themselves. Wealth and power are seductive, wealth and power are transformative, and greed does the rest. Thirty or so years ago, as an activist, I believed that all it took was to change the world and we would change ourselves. The change would come more or less automatically, so all we needed to do was direct our energies to waging a revolution and we would revolutionize ourselves. Alas, that wasn't so at all. Over the decades, I've seen some of the people whose idealism seemed beyond question corrupted in the extreme. Over the decades, I've seen some of the people who seemed willing to give up life for truth, justice and decency, cling to lying, pillage and mayhem as though it were breath itself.

These days, when someone says we need to change ourselves, too, we need to topple the things that tyrannize our hearts and minds, too, I take him seriously. I have seen the horrific effects of a revolution that takes history rather than morality as its guiding light—the "killing fields" most of all—to still believe external transformations alone will do the trick. I myself put it this way in a tribute to Bishop Julio Labayen, which the good bishop has since added to his literary arsenal: The heart of the revolution is the revolution of the heart. I wasn't just making a play on words.

None of this is to say, of course, that we should be reduced to immobility, that we should ignore the corruption and rottenness that stare us in the face and hie off to the mountains to commune with the soul. Though I'm not knocking retreats, secular or religious, they help recharge the batteries of the soul. None of it may make us agree, as GMA and the two Gonzalezes have expressly put it, that we are to blame for their existence and that we deserve the torments they inflict on us.

Cruz is right there, too. Life is a choice: We can acquiesce to injustice or we can fight it; we can embrace wrongdoing or we can push it away. How we deal with the world shapes our soul, too. You keep acquiescing to injustice in the name of finding an inner peace, you won't have a soul to find an inner peace in. You don't have to look far for proof of that. Look what's happening to the country, with its increasing capacity to accept lying cheating and stealing. We now have people saying, "So GMA cheated in the elections, so what?" I am not exaggerating when I say that it will not be long when we start saying, "So he raped the girl, so what? At least he didn't kill her." Or "So he killed a guy, so what? At least he didn't massacre his family." You don't fight iniquity every time it stares you in the face, you lose a chunk of your soul. That is true of individuals, that is true of nations.

In fact, there is no contradiction between what Lagdameo and Cruz say, at least in the best sense of what they say. I'm all for living a deeply interior life, one that examines or interrogates the self at every turn along with the world. But I'm all as well for doing something about the scourge that has fallen upon the land. The second without the first just makes another failed Edsa. The first without the second just makes you a sucker for punishment.

A year of living more dangerously

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

FOR NEARLY SIX MONTHS LAST YEAR, THE most debilitating political scandal ever to hit any Philippine administration in the post-Marcos years—the controversial tapes showing alleged rigging of the 2004 election results—froze the country in a state of partial political paralysis. The political impasse over the street-driven call for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo persisted up until the end of 2005, with no one side winning that epic struggle.

That the Arroyo administration survived the crisis of 2005 and that the challenge from the streets petered out augur ill for the new year. Continuing impasse is a recipe for immobility. There is no basis to the claim that the administration has emerged stronger from the challenges of 2005. Neither can it be said that the forces seeking a premature end to the Arroyo presidency have enhanced their capacity to dismount her.

Our pernicious legacy from 2005 is the continuity of the stalemate. This can only fuel the move for a decisive showdown, which is why 2006 promises to be a year of living more dangerously than last year. In 2005, the tapes defined the issue of national debate. That issue was defined by the notoriety of an election commission official. The controversy over the taped conversations was a national shame, and it contaminated the political vocabulary of the nation, to the exclusion of any other issue, as though nothing else mattered to the Filipinos, with the tape controversy becoming the litmus test of whether they are capable of maintaining a democracy while at the same time proving that their fractious political system can also deliver good governance, as well as economic results.

No issue has exercised the various sectors of Philippine society, including the Church, business and industry, the institutions of state (among them the military and police and the political parties) and civil society, more violently since the assassination of former Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr. in 1983.

The tapes became the Armageddon of Philippine politics, the magnet of conflict, in which every significant sector of society was drawn into conflict, except the poor and common people, whose voices have been muted by the noisy and garrulous middle class which tied to recruit them for street marches to shield the activists from harm.

The common people and the poor have become apathetic to the indecisive conflict. It seems to be a plausible explanation that they are not getting involved in the activism of the streets and the empty debate over the tapes (that feeds the frenzy of the noisy and learned classes) because they have realized that they have nothing to gain from becoming engaged in the political games of the political class.

This is the reason they don't respond to insurrectionary calls from political agitators and they are not at the same time serving as shock troops of the government to defend it in the siege. I believe that if ever this confrontation develops into mayhem in the streets, the poor and the common people are not likely to take sides. They could not care less whose heads would roll in the chaos and whether the present government survives and who would replace it—whether it would be a revolutionary junta or a cabal of generals.

I hazard to say that the uncommitted crowd and the poor and the common people would behave as they had done during previous upheavals and coup attempts. They would line the streets as kibitzers to watch the melee, neither cheering nor cursing any side. They would watch with glee the uncertain outcome of the clashes in the streets.

Evidence on mass mobilization attempts since People Power 1 demonstrates that in a crunch, the poor and the common people can be as opportunistic in assessing their chances as the middle classes. They have learned from Edsa 1 and Edsa 2 that regime change has neither changed nor improved their lot. The disgruntled poor should be the natural constituency for recruitment by the Left, but the poor have given up the Left as their saviors partly because its revolutionary agenda has not enabled it to grab political power.

Like most of us, the poor and the common people love winners—whether in electoral contests or armed struggle—and they tend to flock to the banner of the winners. Since the Left has been the loser in its revolution and at Edsa 1, largely because of its flawed decision to boycott People Power 1, it has become an ineffective organizational force in post-Edsa 1, including at Edsa 2 and the more recent rallies in Makati and the Batasan demanding the resignation of President Arroyo.

The continuing stalemate in 2006 does not promise to produce winners behind which the poor and the middle classes can rally.

The poor and the common people cannot be mobilized to march in mass movements because they have learned that Edsa 1 brought Corazon Aquino to power and Edsa 2 brought Arroyo to power, and the change did not generate social programs that at least provided relief from poverty. They have realized that the cabal that came to power with Aquino and Arroyo belonged to the elite and divided the spoils and opportunities brought about by change among themselves.

Both Aquino and Arroyo betrayed their expectations for change. So, as we move into the new year, I am not at all euphoric or optimistic about 2006 being a year of change, new dynamism or political renewal initiated by the sitting administration or about a revitalization of the opposition.

No issues are likely to emerge to catch the imagination of the public and to rescue us from the sterile issues that defined the debate of 2005.

'Tita Celing's' legacy

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

I JOIN THE REST OF THE NATION IN MOURNING the passage of retired Supreme Court Justice Cecilia Muñoz Palma, the first woman to be named to the highest court in the land.

But if "Tita Celing" is remembered today with something close to reverence, it's not only because she paved the way for women in the practice of law and in the judiciary, but more so for the example she set as a lawyer, justice and champion of human rights.

As the news story in this paper reported, she was called an "ingrate" by no less than a colleague in the Court after she delivered a speech calling for a "return" to the rule of law, an oblique but quite obvious reference to the martial-law regime of Ferdinand Marcos.

It may not seem like such a brave thing to do these days, especially after the phrase "the rule of law" has been so basely corrupted, but at the time she spoke out, it was like an oracle of wisdom and courage had finally spoken out. Marcos, after all, wished to veil his repressive regime with the trappings of legality and legitimacy, in which scheme the martial law-era Supreme Court was a key player. For a member of the tribunal, and the only woman at that, to "bell the cat" and finally expose the truth about Marcos' "smiling" martial law was a real breakthrough, one of many individual acts of courage that, cumulatively, drove the Marcoses from Malacañang.

* * *

"TITA CELING" Palma was one of a small group of seniors who often put their younger comrades to shame in the course of the protests and the mounting of the "Parliament of the Streets" for almost a decade before the Edsa uprising.

She was joined in this endeavor by former Senators Lorenzo Tañada and Jose Diokno, and most visibly by Joaquin "Chino" Roces, all of whom volunteered to take their places in the front line of protest marches, challenging the Marcosian riot police to go after the protesters by starting with these elderly and respected icons of freedom.

They were not always successful. Memorable and powerful still is the picture of these older protest leaders being subjected to blasts from a water cannon, which may not have been fatal but were certainly painful.

This tells us that the hankering for freedom, and the moral courage that impels individuals to stake even their lives for it, know no age limits nor respect one's status in life. Along with students, workers and newly-resurgent professionals and business folk, older folk saw and experienced for themselves the abuses of a repressive regime and decided it was time to speak out and to act to bring an end to it.

Palma's passing recalls the era of protest and righteous anger, but also marks yet another move away from the freshness of the memory. The time will come when too few individuals will remember just what living under martial law was like, in much the same way that World War II is now but a dim memory. But while we can still remember, we need to use every occasion, such as a remembrance of Tita Celing, to freshen our indignation and determination anew.

* * *

LET me add my newly-resurgent peso's worth of opinion on the proposal of former Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines president Archbishop Fernando Capalla to establish a "Bishops-Congressmen's Forum" allegedly to "facilitate a free exchange of ideas in crafting important laws."

This would, on the surface, appear to be an innocuous suggestion since legislators are really expected to consult with as broad a range of constituents as possible while in the process of crafting laws. And Catholic bishops, of course, constitute an important sector of society.

But would such a "forum" be truly a "free exchange of ideas"? Or would it not rather be a collective and institutionalized form of the common practice of bishops nowadays to "summon" to their palaces legislators behind "controversial" bills that displease the hierarchy?

The ecclesiastical "invitations" are the primary reason bills on such topics as divorce, population management and family planning, non-discrimination based on sexual orientation, even taxation of religious institutions, which start off with hundreds of sponsors, often end up being virtually abandoned, "orphaned" of their authors even before they make their way out of committee-level talks.

I'm afraid the "Bishops-Congressmen's Forum" would only strengthen the hand of an already powerful and heavy-handed institution.

* * *

WHAT I would suggest instead is the establishment of a "Bishops-Faithful Forum" in which these ecclesiastical worthies would be obliged to engage in a "free and open" discussion of social issues and concerns with various sectors of society—especially women, and including gays and lesbians and other individuals the institutional Church deems "deviant."

If there's a body that needs to listen more and discern better, it has to be the CBCP, which often "consults" with lay leaders only to dictate what the faithful should believe, and how they should behave.

Do the bishops listen—not just to married couples but also to single, sexually active women and men, including adolescents—on what their lives are like, especially in finding a balance between responding to one's sexual impulses and living up to one's responsibility to one's partner and family?

Do they even want to talk frankly with women and listen to women's feelings of inferiority and discrimination within a Church that proclaims equality and mutual respect?

Have they ever conducted dialogues with members of sexual minorities to better understand the shifting nature of sexuality and identity?

Before they can demand that legislators listen and consult with them, perhaps our bishops can start by first listening and consulting with their flock.

Hope when there is no hope

COMMENTARY

Denis Murphy

THE SOCIAL WEATHER STATIONS REPORTED recently that more than 80 percent of Filipinos hope that 2006 will be better for them. This seems a good example of Christian hope of which Fr. Catalino Arevalo, S.J. once said, "Christian hope begins when there is no hope."

Such hope appears to be deep in the bones of Filipinos, and luckily so for government and all in authority. In Happyland, Tondo, on Jan. 2, we met thousands of such people, still patient, forbearing and hopeful for better days, though a fire destroyed the homes of 3,000 families there two days before New Year's Day.

Along the North Harbor road the noise is deafening and the air acrid with the smell of *ulingan* smoke, but inside Happy Land, which is half on the shore and half on stilts over the waters of Manila Bay, it is quiet. Blackened house posts stand like tombstones in the dark water and the cement houses on shore are now blackened shells for the most part. Still life goes on more or less normally. People rebuild a *sari-sari* store and houses. Children hurry past in the narrow alleys. The little ones take hold of your pants leg to help them avoid muddy puddles.

Not everyone, however, is active. A man of 60 or so sleeps on the path. We asked a group of young men what was wrong with him and they said, "He's just tired, tired out. That's his house there." Nearby the ruins of his *barong-barong* had been swept into two black piles.

Felisa Obon, 61, sits by the path while her husband Bonifacio tries to get a registration document from a barangay official. "I'm all right," she says, "I'm just so tired. I'll be all right." She and her husband, who drives a tricycle and makes P100 a day, have lived in Happyland since 1985. She has a sweet sad smile.

"Is God angry with Happyland?" we ask. She thinks and tells us, "No, I don't think so. We always say our prayers. I don't think it has anything at all to do with religion."

It is the second fire in four years, she tells us. To rebuild their houses takes whatever little money people have saved for their old age and the education of children.

"Are you angry with the government?" we ask again. "No, they gave us rice."

It's not clear how much aid was given. Some say they received rice once, others twice. Some received nothing. "We'll be all right," Felisa says again. Pictures of politicians come with every kilo of rice that is handed out.

We met the area leaders: Ka Freddie, a barangay kagawad; Mang Tony, president of one of the people's organizations; and Ricardo, a younger man, the president of another people's group. I ask them if the government will award the land to them. The Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council has promised to make a proclamation if they would get the proper clearances from other agencies. The people have been trying to do this for many months. A proclamation means the residents will have the land for good. They won't have to worry anymore about evictions.

"Will they proclaim it?" we ask. The three leaders think the government will do it. Skeptics may doubt if that will ever happen. The Philippine Ports Authority, for example, has opposed such proclamations around the North Harbor. The leaders are hopeful and will most likely remain hopeful even if they are aware of that agency's objections.

"We want to stay here," everyone tells us. If the government tells them to get out, however, they will do what their leaders say. It's no good warning the people that leaders can be bought off and threatened, and mislead them. It would only embarrass them and us.

Not every poor area is as pliant as the Happyland people. We went across the North Harbor road to watch the distribution of aid in a basketball court. It was Sen. Manny Villar's turn to distribute. Big banners announced the fact. Hundreds of people, mostly women, waited in line. A very noisy, congested throng of humanity line up for an hour and each received a 32" x 80" *banig*.

"How do you feel about the aid you got here?" we ask. "Well, it would be nicer if there were some rice."

There was something degrading, we thought, about mothers, young and old, being crushed together for so long for a *banig*.

Down a narrow street, the police were distributing rice. People lined up again and appeared one at a time in front of a door where the iron gate was three quarters closed. There was just enough room for one person to stand in the opening, present his ration card and get a kilo of rice. It looked as if they were getting something illegal. There must be better ways to distribute help.

After that we walked around the area destroyed by fire, especially the dark polluted waters of the bay, where half the people had lived on stilts and where now the only trace left was the blackened posts.

"Why do people have to live like this?" my wife asked. "Why do we allow it?"

We have grown used to millions of our brothers and sisters living over polluted water and in other sub-human conditions, yet there is enough land for all if we use it well. We would demand justice if a parent badly beat his children in Happyland, but we don't mind the daily trauma the children suffer from noise, congestion, violence, hunger and fear of eviction.

And yet as we prepared to leave Happyland, a beautiful sunset was taking shape over the Bataan mountains across Manila Bay. Maybe it's better to keep our eyes on the beauty of sunsets and not on problems only. Maybe it's better to be hopeful.

No one should take credit for the calm optimism of the people. If anything, it gives government and everyone else time to act to better the situation. Happyland is, despite the name, not a fit place for children and isn't worthy of its people. They deserve better.

Denis Murphy works with the Urban Poor Associates.

All will be well

EARTHQUAKES, FLOODS, FOREST FIRES, FAMINE, VENAL politicians, scam scientists, suicide bombers, wars, bird flu, AIDS. . . And all will be well?

Yes, my reply is all will be well, maybe with an exclamation point.

And then there was one

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

I got the idea for my column title after listening to a BBC interview with Michael Meegan, an Irish medical scientist who has worked in Africa for 27 years. He faced a rather cynical interviewer, Stephen Sacker, who kept asking how he could continue to work amid all the problems on that continent. At one point, Sacker referred to an article Meegan had written about how a young African had died in his arms. His voice marked by despair and a tinge of anger, Sacker exclaimed, "Where is your God?"

Meegan calmly replied, "All will be well." Then he went on to enumerate the many gains that have been made in Africa.

That was when I realized that the world often fails to see this progress, sometimes ironically because every other do-gooder wants to save Africa and keeps launching relief campaigns and concerts focusing on the problems rather than on what's being done to overcome those problems.

Meegan pointed out how 16 SubSaharan African countries now offer universal education, and how girls in particular are benefiting. And while there are tens of thousands of AIDS orphans on the continent, the children are not in orphanages—they're being cared for by communities and adopted by neighbors.

And the dictators we often identify Africa with? Meegan's answer was simple: When he first arrived in Africa, there were 21 African dictators. Now, he says, "there's Mugabe," referring to Zimbabwe's despot of a president.

From 21 to 1, that's not bad at all. Sure corruption's still endemic, but when you have democratic institutions in place, there's a better fighting chance to deal with that corruption and pursuing a development agenda.

As I listened to Meegan, I thought of how the Kenyan shilling emerged in 2005 as the second best performing currency in the world, after the Brazilian real. The Philippine peso, if you're wondering, ranked 5th, but that's not why I think all will be well.

I thought of Liberia electing a woman president, the first on the continent. Like our own president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is an economist, but she's not a traditional politician. She speaks her mind, and once was thrown in jail for that. More importantly, in her interviews it's clear she has a good feel of what people need. For a former World Bank and United Nations technocrat, she has modest goals: a hand pump in every village, for example, and universal education.

Whistling in the dark

Listening to Meegan, I thought about the Philippines, which has problems that are not quite as serious as those of many African countries.

Maybe I'm whistling in the dark, trying to gain some courage. But I don't want to pretend, either, that all's well already, as government propagandists do all the time, crowing about the strong peso without giving enough credit to the sweat and tears of overseas workers, whose remittances account for much of the peso's strength, if not the economy being kept afloat.

No, no rosy statistics for me. I find comfort and hope in everyday stories of what Filipinos are doing to overcome adversity. I celebrate when I hear of Justino Arboleda who won a BBC Global Challenge award for using coconut coir and fiber to create anti-erosion "coconets." I am thrilled, as well, with the Galing Pook awards to local government units, with all kinds of achievements from the northern Iloilo municipality of Concepcion's innovative synergy of environmental conservation efforts with family planning to bicycle-friendly Marikina.

Then there's the Visayan Forum's Cecilia Flores-Oebando winning the 2005 Anti-Slavery Award for her organization's work, specifically with domestic workers. She, too, was interviewed on the BBC, sharing some of the most harrowing stories about the abuse of child domestic workers as well as the efforts of her NGO that go a long way: halfway houses for abused workers, income-generating projects for the displaced ones.

We hear too little about these initiatives, so I was elated when the INQUIRER had a front-page article about the Ateneo de Manila's Leaders for Health Program (LHP) which has Filipino physicians serving rural impoverished communities. So who says Filipino physicians are either taking nursing so they can migrate, or are only interested in making lots of money in plush urban hospitals? The LHP doctors aren't into ordinary charity programs; the physicians are in there for the long haul, learning to deal with political realities. I've listened to these physicians explaining their situation and am at once overwhelmed by the odds they face as well as inspired by their commitment.

Like those doctors in rural communities, I am aware of the tremendous odds we face. Which is why I want to assure Tito Elliot Anderson, one of my readers in Ozamiz, that I will continue with a regular fare of angst. The year of the dog should allow me to growl a bit more about sleaze, slime and other forms of high-living low-life.

Finding a way

At the same time, I hope to continue sharing the little stories I pick up from little people with big hearts. A few weeks back, Dr. Henny Espanola of the West Visayas State University was telling me about how the economic crisis was being reflected in an increase this year in the number of medical students applying for financial assistance. Somehow, word leaked from the administration about the limited number of scholarships. So what do you think happened?

I'm sure some of you are thinking of parents trying to use connections to get the scholarships. Not quite. Several students and parents did approach the administrators, but to withdraw their scholarship applications. One student said she could probably manage on the remittances of her father, an overseas worker. In so many words, those who withdrew said they were doing so to give a chance to those in greater need. Meanwhile, they'd find a way to manage.

I've often heard Filipinos complain that we're doomed for failure because of our *bahala na* mentality, which is misinterpreted as fatalism. Those students and parents at West Visayas State University remind us that if we do invoke *bahala na*, it's often only after we've made many attempts to solve a problem. Yes, we sigh, "*Bahala na,*" but we also assure those in need, in crisis: "*Gagawa tayo ng paraan*" (We'll find a way). That's why I believe that with time, all will be well.

The INQUIRER is a member of the
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THE TWO bells taken from the church of Balangiga by American soldiers. PDI PHOTO

Balangiga bells a reminder of America's colonial ambitions

I AM TIRED OF READING, YEAR after year, about the refusal of the US government to return the bells of Balangiga (Samar).

The Statue of Liberty in New York and the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia symbolize freedom. In fact, the word "America" is generally considered synonymous with freedom. On the other hand, the bells of Balangiga in the hands of the Americans remind us of the US government's imperialistic subjugation of the Filipino people.

The Balangiga incident was part of the Philippine-American War, a war fought by our forefathers to resist America's colonial designs in the Philippines. That war the US government waged without congressional sanction. With that war, America installed itself as the second colonial master of the Filipinos, immediately after the latter succeeded in freeing themselves from 333 years of Spanish bondage.

It did not matter to the US government, then, that 35 years earlier, Abraham Lincoln emancipated the Negro slaves or that the US Constitution did not contain a provision authorizing the conquest and colonization of other nations and territories. When America imposed its sovereignty over the Filipinos, it in effect overthrew the Malolos government, which was the first republican government to be set up in Asia.

Today, America is engaged in another war—purportedly to bring democratic rule to the Iraqi people. This war is essentially no different from the war that the US government waged against the Filipino people in 1899.

And the bells of Balangiga, for as long as they remain in American possession, tell us that the US government has not given up its colonial ambitions.

If the US government insists on keeping the bells, the people of Balangiga can request the national government to seek the assistance of the Vatican. After all, the bells are also the property of the Catholic Church.

—VIRGILIO V. BAYBAY,
Ilawod, Guinobatan, Albay 4503

LETTERS

Technicality can't prove guilt decisively

THE POINT RAISED BY COLUMNIST Solita Monsod that Hubert Webb was convicted based on technical reasons deserve serious reconsideration by the Supreme Court. (PDI, 12/24/05) The plane tickets and manifests that proved Hubert was in the United States when the crime was committed were rejected by the Court because they were mere photocopies. The testimony of Hubert's relatives in the United States were trashed because, according to the judge, relatives will lie to save a kin. Following that asinine logic, a father cannot save his own son even if the father is telling the truth.

The note verbale from the US State Department confirming the presence of Hubert in the United States was rejected by the Court and yet Congress finds the note verbale from the Singapore Foreign Ministry more credible than Virgilio Garcillano's passport.

Justice is not served when conviction is based on a technicality. Planted evidence and false testimony have sent innocent people to prison for crimes they did not commit. The probability of innocence deserves to be given more weight than the probability of guilt when technicality has given way to reasonable doubt. Do the justices fear that if Hubert is declared innocent, it would shatter the credibility of the lone witness who testified against him which may also lead to the release of the others convicted of the crime and trigger a backlash of public opinion?

A faithful dispenser of justice is one who has the moral courage to challenge the limits of the law when a human life is at stake and will refuse to be tied down by the technical rule of law but abide by the factual reality of circumstances. He is a compassionate judge who consciously weighs the delicate balance between innocence and guilt and does not succumb to political pressure or fear to antagonize public opinion. Technicality does not prove the guilt of a person in absolute terms. Precisely because of it there is reason to believe that the probability of innocence exists.

Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban says he is for judicial activism, whatever that means. Hubert Webb is innocent. Please set him free.

—CESAR M. DE LOS REYES,
cesdlrey@i-manila.com.ph

Coverage of MTRCB suspension order

WE WRITE IN REFERENCE TO your lead story last Dec. 18 in your newspaper's Entertainment section titled, "MTRCB suspends cable channel."

We would like to clarify that the suspension order issued by the MTRCB for alleged transmission of objectionable content by the international channel TVE rightly applies to all cable television operators which carry that channel. The Philippine Cable Television Association (PCTA) and its members do not have control over the program content of international channels since their signals are directly transmitted to our subscribers as "real-time online satellite feeds."

This is in consonance with an existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed by the MTRCB earlier this year with the PCTA which says that any suspension of channels shall be applicable to all cable operators, with no operator being singled out. It is the responsibility of each of the channels to guard its own content. A separate MOA was signed by the MTRCB and the Federation of International Cable TV Association of the Philippines (Ficap).

The PCTA is seeking an audience with MTRCB Chair Marissa Laguardia to discuss and clarify the details of the suspension order in connection with Channel TVE.

Lastly, may we also inform you that Central CATV (SkyCable) and Global-Destiny are members of the PCTA and not Ficap.

Thank you for allowing us to clarify this matter.

—TONY V. SELDA,
president, Philippine Cable Television Association Inc.,
Unit 504 Taipan Place Condominium, Emerald Avenue,
Ortigas Center, Pasig City

Is quitting a job now a serious crime?

PRESS RELATIONS AGENTS Amor Maclang and Brad Geiser used the INQUIRER last Dec. 11 to cast doubts on the reputation of Carlo Antonio C. Cordero with a "notice to the public" saying that he was no longer connected with them as of Nov. 14, 2005 and urging readers "to report to GMCI any attempts by Mr. Cordero to transact business on the company's behalf."

Who is Carlo A.C. Cordero and what crime did he commit? Carlo is a fresh graduate of the University of the Philippines Los Baños with a degree in BA Philosophy (cum laude). An active student leader, he chaired the College of Arts and Sciences Student Council and the University Student Council chose him as one of the 10 most outstanding student leaders at UPLB. Carlo loves to write. He is the youngest in the family and our only son.

He had the option to enroll in law school right after graduation, but only 20, he decided to work to finance his studies later.

After the notice came out, concerned friends started calling us. One confided that her husband had told her: "*May kaso 'yan. Hindi ka ilalagay diyan kung walang kaso* (He must have a case, otherwise they would not have put out that notice)." Other friends inquired in roundabout ways. And what did the rest of the world who saw the ad think? What message did Geiser Maclang Communications Inc. try to convey?

Carlo was hired as a writer last Sept. 7 by GMCI, a successful mom-and-pop venture engaged in "press relations." He thought it was the perfect job for him.

However, it did not take long for him to discover the realities of employment. In less than a month, he was up to his neck with the "management style" of his superiors. Sixty-seven days after he first reported to work, he submitted his letter of resignation. He left without waiting for the 30-day period for his resignation to take effect and never came back.

Is it such an oddity for workers to walk out on bosses whom they find unreasonable and imperious? I did exactly the same thing 35 years ago.

Very seldom do employers put out notices of this sort. It is sparingly used and reserved only for those who stole money because the damage it can inflict is immeasurable. It is a penalty that is grossly disproportionate to whatever malfeasance an employee did. And it's worse if he is not guilty of anything.

The ad created the perception that Carlo is about to commit fraud at his employer's expense. What was its purpose if not to ruin my son's reputation and close all doors to his reemployment? It was a cheap attempt to cut my son's ladder to his future before he could even get on the first step.

The simple truth is that Carlo quit his job. He did not steal any money and any insinuation that he is scheming to do so is without basis. The public notice was not only demeaning but malicious, to say the least.

My son did nothing wrong, except perhaps to bruise the big egos of Maclang and Geiser. They owe him an apology.

—JESS CORDERO JR.,
sweet_pep@yahoo.com

Helping animals through vegetarian diet

WHILE LEGALIZING THE SALE and consumption of dog meat is a matter of debate, there is no denying that the atrocities inflicted upon dogs slaughtered for human consumption in many parts of Asia are shockingly cruel. ("Benguet execs say dog meat eating is a right," PDI, 11/11/05)

Dogs are often fully conscious as they are strung up by their necks and beaten violently in order to increase the flow of adrenaline in their bodies, which is believed to increase the virility of men who eat it.

Many dogs raised for food await this nightmarish fate on farms and in markets where they endure horrible conditions in crowded cages—often so small that standing up is impossible—without food or water for days on end.

We all can help animals that are abused and killed for food by choosing a healthy, humane vegetarian diet. For a free vegetarian starter kit, visit GoVeg.com.

—SONIA G. ASTUDILLO,
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta) Asia-Pacific,
SoniaA@PETAAsiaPacific.org

Draft charter an exercise in futility and a waste of money

IT WAS AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY. This was all people could say about the Report of the Consultative Commission created by President Macapagal-Arroyo to draft a new constitution.

The Senate has already rejected the recommendations of the ConCom. And ironically, administration senators, like Francisco Pangilinan, Richard Gordon and Joker Arroyo, were among the first to register their opposition. Arroyo said: "It is bad enough that the draft constitution submitted by the ConCom is unoriginal. What makes it worse is that it is a copycat, a plagiarism of Marcos' 1973 Constitution." Arroyo went on to ask, "With such Marcosian stamps and footprints, how can anyone support the ConCom proposal?"

How about the funds spent by the commission? Although the funds came from the pork barrel of the President, the money could have been channeled to productive purposes, if not to alleviate the sufferings of our less fortunate brethren.

—GODOFREDO O. PETEZA SR.,
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Barangay Camambugan, Daet,
Camarines Norte 4600

If faith sustains, love empowers

THIS HAS REFERENCE TO THE High Blood article of Minyong Ordoñez which you published in your Dec. 30, 2005 issue. Ordoñez dismissed agnostics like me as ignoramuses, empty-headed and generally lacking in intelligence. I suppose he has never heard of Albert Einstein, Louis Pasteur, Charles Darwin and countless other agnostics and atheists who made tremendous contributions to humanity.

Maybe, he should stop using electricity, driving a car, watching television or taking antibiotics, since all of these things were invented and/or discovered by mostly godless people.

As for the value of faith, if it sustains a person or even a nation, so be it. However one should understand what faith really means and not put down those who don't share one's beliefs.

Finally, the power of love is universal. It transcends faith and other things man has thought about. Thank you and Happy New Year!

—JORGE OCTAVIANO,
1 Florvil St., Delta Village,
Tandang Sora, Quezon City

Turnover of accused GIs hampered by security risks

THIS REFERS TO THE ISSUE OF who should have custody of the American servicemen accused of raping a Filipina in Subic. It reminds me of the request of the Philippine government for the extradition of Arturo Pacificador, the suspected mastermind behind the murder of Antique Gov. Evelio Javier.

I think the government of Canada did not grant the request to extradite Pacificador due to the deplorable, sub-human conditions in Philippine prisons, including the lack of security and safety of prisoners.

It's easy for anyone to enter prison as well as for prisoners to walk out of prison. This could be the reason why the turnover of the accused Americans to Philippine authorities has not been effected.

—ANTONIO BARRIENTOS,
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Preying on the desperate over the airwaves

COMMENTARY

Isabel T. Escoda

TWO PLAINTIVE VOICES KEEP ECHOING in my mind. One is Letty's, an impoverished housewife in Cagayan Province; the other is Miriam's, a melancholy spinster in Quezon City's Project 8. Quite by chance, I heard them over my small transistor radio recently. Manila stations can sometimes be heard in Hong Kong over the AM meter-band late at night or early mornings—and the clearest signals belong to El Shaddai and the Iglesia ni Cristo, which calls itself "*Ang boses ng katotohanan*" (the voice of truth), both of which engage in endless preaching and praying.

The women's desperate-sounding voices came through the crackle of static from dzME which calls itself "Radyo Uno" ("*Ang mas respetado*"). The two women were asking a certain "Kuya Danny" for healing during his "Adventure Phenomenon" program.

The cocky-sounding Danny asked Letty if she was alone. She said her three small sons were with her. No husband? He worked as a security guard (from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.). What was her problem? Letty was worried about a *bukol* (lump) in her breast. Cancer *kaya ito*? (Might this be cancer?) she asked softly. Had she seen a doctor? Her quiet no probably meant she couldn't afford to pay a doctor or there wasn't one in her town. Where was she? By the sea near Fort (*inaudible*) in Cagayan, she said.

OK, said Danny, stand in front of a mirror under a light bulb. Letty said she had no electricity. This produced a 'Sus! from Danny and snickers from his sidekick "Mirador." She had candles.

OK, he said, use that, get a glass of water, place your hand over the afflicted breast, shut your eyes, breathe deeply, take a sip of water, then swivel your head till I tell you to stop.

Are you doing it? *Opo*, she replied. Now stop and tell me how the lump feels—was it smaller? She said she wasn't sure. He put her through the paces again, then asked: How does it feel now? Tentatively she said it seemed smaller. Good! He told her to keep swiveling that head.

And so it went for some minutes while he and Mirador made ribald remarks about the female anatomy.

Soon Danny had apparently mesmerized Letty into saying she could no longer feel the lump. *Sino'ng pasasalamatan mo?* (Whom do you thank?), he asked. "Adventure Phenomenon," she replied. "Station dzME, 1530." *Sino pa?* (Who else?) Mama Mary, was the answer.

After Letty, Miriam from Project 8 came on air. She was diabetic and always felt sick, despite a herbalist's potions. Danny asked if she was alone. Yes. Married? No. Did she have a boyfriend? Yes, but....

A-ha! Danny shrieked. Have you been making "Ocho-ocho" with a married man? Miriam giggled, so Danny lectured her about the evils of adultery before doing the deep-breath-eyes-shut-glass-of-water-head-rotating routine. Ten minutes later she said she felt better.

Callers to the show apparently don't mind being needled. Perhaps they put up with coarse comments because Kuya Danny is a celebrity who performs "cures," so they let him toy with their emotions since he claims it cheers them up. He obviously provides the hope they can't get elsewhere.

Another night, one of Danny's callers was a 72-year-old man with a sexual problem. Did he have a wife? Danny asked. Yes, and she was around. Danny laughingly asked if she complained because "*maiksi ang iyong pototoy*" (your penis is short). The man gave a nervous whinny. Well, let's fix it, said Danny. He told the man to shut his eyes, tug his penis with one hand, sip from a glass of water with the other, take a deep breath and rotate his head.

Eventually he got the man to state not only that the water tasted progressively saltier, but that his member seemed longer. Danny and Mirador's raucous remarks punctuated the routine, after which the grateful caller thanked them, the radio station and Mama Mary.

During station breaks, girls warbled the jingles "When you light a Hope…" then sang of "Fortune International, the largest-selling luxury cigarette." Then came: "Government Warning: Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health."

By contrast, government-run dzRB (Radyo ng Bayan's "Super Radyo") seeks to present positive news ("*Ang balitang totoo*"—the true news), obviously to counter the anti-administration noise generated by the rest of the media. Touting its Catholic Mass Media Award, it features informative agricultural programs at ungodly hours.

One morning, I heard President Macapagal-Arroyo's recording in Taglish asking for Filipinos to unite, saying, "Our nation is strong and getting stronger," and ending with "God bless the Philippines." This was followed by the unctuous tones of a Rafael Dante Cruz (punctuated by a catchy American TV theme song), downplaying bird flu—no migratory birds at Candaba swamps, casualties in China and Vietnam are small, considering their large populations, so no need for the Philippines to worry. There was as much rah-rah as blah-blah.

With large numbers of medical practitioners having left the country for greener pastures, and scarce government funding for health care, the vast majority of Filipinos living outside the major towns and cities inevitably get only rudimentary, or no, health care. So faith healers, quacks and con-men like Danny can blithely prey on the desperate. (Women do it, too. One peddles a "Miracle Molecule" over a near-inaudible radio station and features testimonials from folks cured of incurable diseases, while she provides phone and text numbers for information on the product.)

That radio is a powerful medium is a given, but sadly the overall quality of radio personnel and programming in the Philippines is so abysmal, it's small wonder that misuse (and abuse) takes place. With lax guidelines to promote excellence over the airwaves, this allows charlatans to prey on their listeners, turning what should be informative, educational programs into the lowest form of "entertainment."

Isabel T. Escoda has written about Filipinos in Hong Kong in her books, "Letters from Hong Kong," "Hong Kong Postscript" and "Pinoy Abroad," her latest.

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Prospects bright in the North

By the PDI Northern Luzon Bureau and PDI Central Luzon Desk

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS and business leaders in Northern and Central Luzon are looking forward to 2006 as a brighter year for investments in the regions.

Presidential adviser for North Luzon Renato Diaz said 2006 would be a "much better year" for Central Luzon.

"Prospects are looking up for Central Luzon in all aspects such as more investments, more foreign and local tourists, more airline flights, faster implementation of projects, more job opportunities, continuing peace and order," Diaz said.

Bulacan Gov. Josefina de la Cruz, chair of the regional development council (RDC), said more opportunities lie in agriculture, tourism and information technology.

"If we put our efforts together and focus on our competitive edge we can surpass Southern Tagalog in 2006. Our biggest threats are insurgency and labor unrest," she said.

OUTLOOK 2006

Renato Tayag Jr., convenor of Global Gateways, an organization of businessmen and local officials promoting major infrastructure projects in Central Luzon, said the region's growth this year and beyond would be driven by projects like the North Luzon Expressway, Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway and the NorthRail.

Tayag also said the overseas direct flights to Clark and remittances from overseas Filipino workers that are now funding the housing boom in the metro Pampanga area would also propel the region's engine growth.

"With these major infrastructures ... the influx of big real estate developers in the western side of Central Luzon for tourism are prelude to the natural growth of the regional economy. There will be more employment and infusion of money that will contribute to a better economy than 2005," said Renato Romero, business sector representative in RDC.

Levy Laus, Pampanga Chamber of Commerce and Industry president, said Central Luzon will continue to be a "leading and interesting region."

"Its accessibility that is enhanced by the North Luzon Express will attract business expansion north of Metro Manila. It will have a very strong consumer base with a big percentage of OFWs coming from the region," he said.

Engines of growth

Antonio Ng, president and chief executive officer of the Clark Development Corp., has listed key initiatives in 2006 anchored on four engines of growth.

Ng identified these major growth engines as the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport's positioning as Asia's most affordable gateway (Airport Para sa Masa); industrial development to create job opportunities (Gawang Pinoy, Gawang Clark); tourism; and infrastructure.

Officials and investors in Clark are also keeping their hopes high for the passage of two bills in the House of Representatives that would grant tax amnesty and duty free privilege to business enterprises in the special economic zone.

In Nueva Ecija, businessmen and property owners in the province would confront increased taxes so prospects for exciting business activities are "not very bright," said Vicky Gaetos, president of the Nueva Ecija Chamber of Commerce.

She said local governments in the province have increased real property taxes.

The implementation of the expanded value added tax law this year and the high cost of electricity are added worries for businessmen.

TASK Force Subic chief retired Gen. Jose M. Calimlim and Customs collector Marietta Zamoranos go through bales of used clothing known in the vernacular as "ukay-ukay" which were illegally imported through the Subic Bay Freeport.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

EMILIA Perucha of Tablac, Candon City, Ilocos Sur continues work in the holidays picking tobacco leaves. She is paid P150 a day. Tobacco is the premiere cash crop of the city.

LEONCIO G. BALBIN JR.

"How we wish that more small and medium enterprises start operating in the province. But we don't hear many people interested in doing that maybe because of fear of losses," she said.

Gaetos said Nueva Ecija's farmers were not getting the just reward for their hard work because of the cartel in the rice industry in the province. She said the cartel dictates the buying price of *palay*.

"We hope that the farmers themselves, through a strong organization, heed the call to do the milling and marketing of their produce," she said.

Tarlac Rep. Jesli Lapus said the economic zones in Subic and Clark will continue to sustain and spark economic growth in the region.

But he said the continuing unrest at the Hacienda Luisita and the renewed activities of the New People's Army in the region will have negative effects on the regional economy.

Hacienda Luisita will remain unproductive due to the recent decision of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council revoking the stock distribution option in the 4,000-hectare sugar estate.

Joey Romasanta, vice president of the Jose Cojuangco & Sons, the managing firm of Luisita, said the decision will further stall farm productivity as they are not going to plant sugarcane while the agrarian issue remains unsettled.

Cordillera

The Cordillera's economic outlook is moderate at best for 2006, as it survives a year "that could have gone worse," according to Juan Ngalob, Cordillera director of the National Economic and Development Authority.

Cordillera farms continue to produce crops but only to service a lackluster vegetable market, Ngalob said.

He said 2005 ended with no significant improvements for the region's industries because investments had been pouring instead into call centers located inside the Baguio City Economic Zone.

The call center boom does not translate to higher opportunities for many Cordillera provinces, Ngalob said.

The average income of a Cordillera family is P128,078 a year but it spends P106,668.

The much-hyped resurgence of mining, due to President Macapagal-Arroyo's open endorsement of the industry, has not been felt in the region, where the industry was born.

Benguet Corp., the first Philippine mine firm, was set up in 1903 in Itogon, Benguet. Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. and Philex Mining Corp. still thrive in Benguet.

But Philex is winding up its operations there, Ngalob said.

"The Cordillera will experience [some windfall profits] if Lepanto pursues its Victoria gold project this year, but I believe we should expect that it will only restore Lepanto's original production levels," he said.

Mining is also facing opposition from Cordillera towns that claim to have suffered from extractive mining from the 1950s to the '70s.

Cagayan Valley, Ilocos

In Nueva Vizcaya, 2006 is brighter for the provincial government after its success in its legal battle to collect more than P250 million in real property tax from the Casecnan multi-purpose irrigation and power project in Alfonso Castañeda town.

"What we have collected from the Casecnan project is now being used for the purchase of equipment to improve the implementation and repair of infrastructure projects such as school buildings," said lawyer Desiderio Perez, provincial legal officer.

The local government, Perez said, is also bent on pursuing its share of the national wealth tax under the operation of the Casecnan project and real property and mineral taxes from existing and pending applications from small scale and large scale mining projects in the province.

Businessmen ponder on a sense of guarded optimism for their trade, said Marianita Danao, president of the Nueva Vizcaya Bankers' Association.

"Almost all of our businessmen clients complain about how the past year has been one of the toughest for their businesses, primarily caused by the sharp increases in the prices of fuel," she said.

Danao said the local banking sector is optimistic that the present economic crisis would continue to be offset by the increase in remittances from OFWs.

The full operation of the special economic zone in Sta. Ana, Cagayan, is also expected to boost commercial activities not only in Cagayan but in Cagayan Valley.

In Isabela, Rep. Edwin Uy said the P200-million corn oil processing plant would be put up in Gamu town to complement the corn industry in the province and create jobs.

In La Union, agriculture and tourism development will be top priority programs of the La Union provincial government in 2006, with small-scale industries receiving similar attention.

Mauro Libatique Jr., provincial planning and development officer, said the provincial government is embarking on a hybrid seed subsidy program for which more than P1 million has been set aside for the purchase of 1,000 bags of hybrid seeds for distribution to selected farmers.

Rice production is expected to increase by 20 percent, he said.

The coastal towns of San Juan and Bacnotan will be promoted as a prime surfing paradise in the North, he said, adding that investors in handicraft manufacturing will be invited to put up their businesses in the area.

The province will put up an investment promotion and tourism office in San Fernando City.

Libatique also said that the provincial government has also taken over the building owned by the Department of Tourism in the Rosario junction tourism complex in Barangay Saytan in Rosario town.

At least P40 million has been earmarked for the development of the area and the rehabilitation of the building that will be converted into a display center for La Union wood furniture products and furnishings. A one-stop-shop investment and tourism center for all travelers will also be put up in the building.

Businesses will be put up in the 68-hectare commercial and tourism complex in the Poro Point special economic and freeport zone in San Fernando City. The complex, in the heart of the former Wallace Air Station, held its ceremonial opening in May last year.

Tourists and businessmen are expected to come to the provincial with commercial flights using the San Fernando Airport starting last September.

The controversial casino operated by a United States-based firm is also scheduled to open this year in the zone, and high rollers are expected from Hong Kong and neighboring countries.

In Pangasinan, the rehabilitation of two airports and the establishment of a seaport are the main projects being pursued by the provincial government to spur development in the province.

Gov. Victor Agbayani has asked the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) to allocate funds for the immediate construction and development of the Sual seaport that "will play a vital role in the economic progress and industrial development in the province, creating livelihood opportunities, job generation and employment and increased port activities."

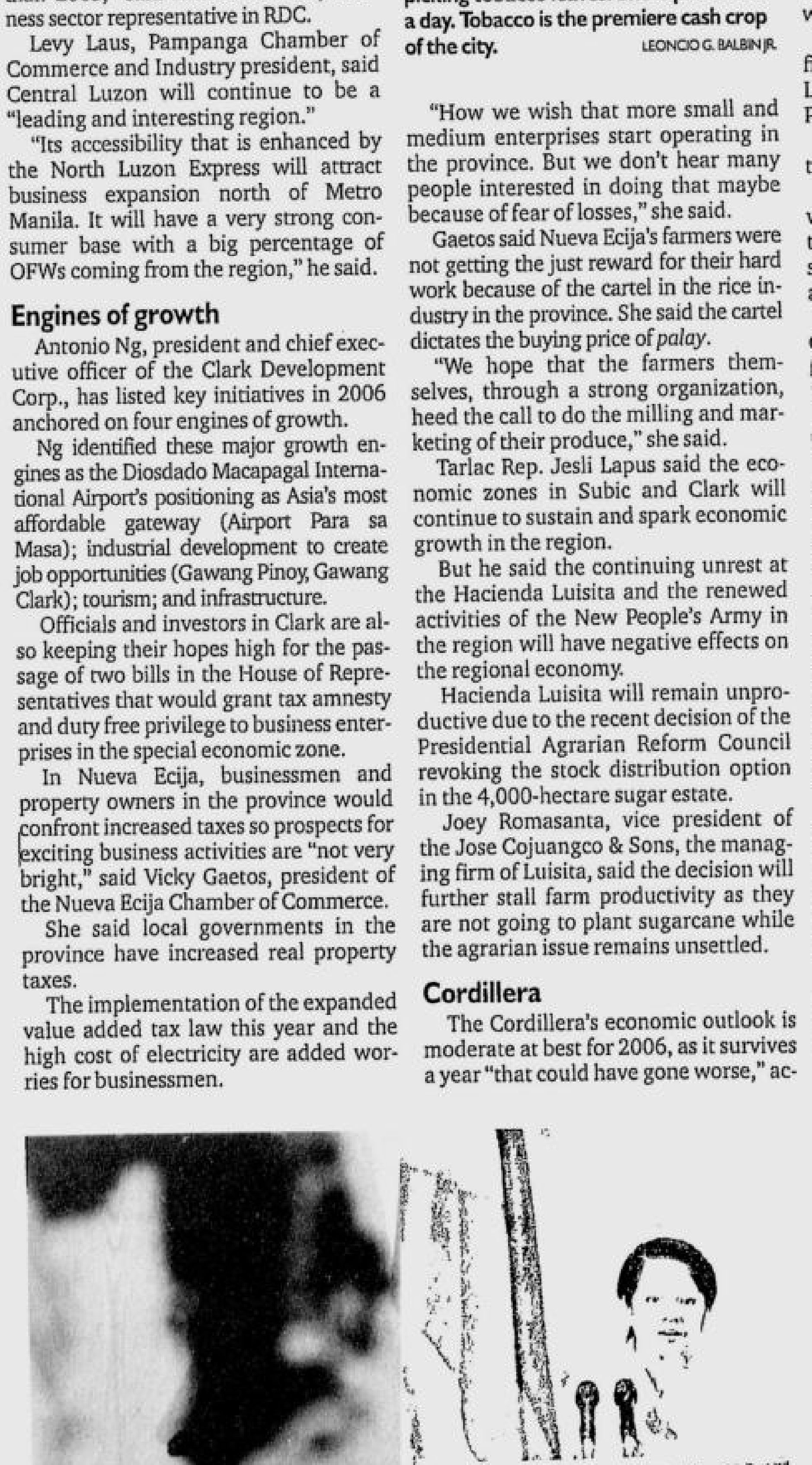
The project will serve the needs of the existing and proposed industrial zones in Pangasinan and nearby provinces, Agbayani said.

Assistant Secretary Nilo Jatico of the Department of Transportation and Communications said the DOTC and the Air Transportation Office have proposed the allocation of P15 million for the resurfacing of the runway and apron of the Lingayen airport.

Agbayani has asked local governments in Pangasinan to enact ordinances granting incentives to local and foreign investors.

In Ilocos Norte, more industries are expected to come in with the full operation of the wind power plant in Bangui town.

Long before the wind farm was built, business developers have started discussing with Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand Marcos Jr. potential businesses like glass and cement plants in eastern Ilocos Norte towns. *Reports from Tonette Orejas, Jo Martinez-Clemente, Anselmo Roque, Jun Malig, Cesar Villa, Russell Arador, Carmela Reyes, Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Villamor Visaya Jr., Peter La. Julian, Estanislao Caldez, Ben Moses Ebreo, Melvin Gascon, Cristina Arzadon and Vincent Cabreza*



PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo during a recent seminar at the Clark Special Economic Zone.

LYN RILLON

Political killings, meningo, a rape case

THE YEAR 2005 IN CENTRAL and Northern Luzon was marked by a rape case involving Americans, killings of political activists, the fear of a bacterial disease and the controversy arising from "jueteng."

A bright note came in November and December with the resolution of a 13-month agriculture and labor conflict in Central Luzon's biggest sugar plantation.

Subic rape case

Dubbed now as a litmus test to the 1999 RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement, the alleged rape by six US Marines of a 22-year-old Filipino woman from Zamboanga City happened inside the Subic Bay Freeport, a former American naval base, on Nov. 1.

It sparked public outrage, with critics seeing in the woman the human face of the iniquitous relationship between the Philippines and the US.

Like a blast from the past, the alleged incident brought again to the fore the issues of hosting and taking custody of American troops, matters that were contentious until after 1992 when Subic was the last of the bases to close in Luzon.

In the bases years as now, the US military has stuck to a policy of keeping custody of its servicemen. Four of the six soldiers charged with rape have yet to be turned over to the local courts.

What is new in this case, however, is that the VFA did give the Philippine courts the right to exercise primary jurisdiction over US military personnel who commit offenses in the country.

Political killings

PALPARAN

By the account of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, the victims of political killings in Central Luzon have risen to 47 since last January, which was a record high.

It observed that most of the slayings happened after September when Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. assumed command of the Army's 7th Infantry Division.

The killings, according to Bayan, demonstrated that the government had adopted a policy of executing activists as a means to quell opposition.

Jueteng

The illegal numbers game jueteng was stopped in Central and Northern Luzon in May, on the heels of the renewed anti-illegal gambling crusade by Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz and claims by whistle-blowers to the Senate that the close kin of President Macapagal-Arryo were among the racket's top protectors.

Until December, the Philippine National Police continued to claim that Central Luzon remained jueteng-free. Reports of guerrilla-style operations as well as the use of the state-run EZ-2 as front for jueteng undermined the PNP's claims.

Hacienda Luisita

The 13-month joint strike of almost 6,000 industrial and farm laborers at the 5,000-hectare Hacienda Luisita reached a thorny conclusion toward the end of 2005.

Government decided to cancel the controversial stock distribution option scheme and prepared to place the estate under the coverage of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

The owner, the family of former President Corazon Aquino, appeared not keen at easily giving up the property, decrying government's move as a retaliation for Aquino's opposition to President Macapagal-Arroyo amid the allegations of election cheating by the latter.

The strike saw seven workers killed during the Nov. 16, 2004 dispersal and four leaders and supporters, including Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union president Ricardo Ramos in the next months.

Meningococcemia

The year 2005 hurt Baguio City because its business and social conditions were defined by a brief outbreak of a meningitis strain that killed 18 of 38 infected people between October 2004 and January 2005.

Tourists avoided the city during the 2004 Christmas holidays and this caused a sharp drop in hotel bookings in Baguio, whose economy largely depends on tourism.

Attendance to the annual Baguio Flower Festival or Panagbenga was low due to fear of the disease. Some conventions and conferences scheduled even during the Holy Week in 2005 were canceled, according to Frederico Alquiros, general manager of the Camp John Hay Hotels Inc.

A task force composed of the World Health Organization and the Department of Health discovered that the strain in Baguio was peculiar because infections did not appear to have been transmitted by carriers. *Tonette Orejas and Vincent Cabreza*

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GMA orders P66M given for Calapan City rehab

CITY OF CALAPAN—PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo ordered the Department of Public Works and Highways and the National Irrigation Administration to expedite the rehabilitation of the damaged protection dike in Bucayao River.

The President came here yesterday aboard a helicopter to personally inspect the damaged dike and get an update on the rehabilitation efforts being done by the provincial government of Oriental Mindoro and the city government of Calapan.

The helicopter touched down at the Jose J. Leido Jr. Memorial National High School at about 10:10 a.m., where the President was welcomed by local government officials led by Gov. Arnan Panaligan, Calapan City Mayor Carlos Brucal and Rep. Rodolfo Valencia.

After a closed-door briefing with local officials, Ms Arroyo traveled to the Bucayao River via the Strong Republic Nautical Highway, which was closed during the recent floods, amid tight security.

At the site of the damaged protection dike, she listened to an update on the proposed flood control project from local officials.

Panaligan thanked the President for the approval of the P66-million fund needed to construct the permanent dikes as a permanent solution to the flood problem in Baco, San Teodoro, Naujan, Victoria, Socorro and Pinamalayan towns and Calapan City.

The P66-million fund will be used for the 600-lineal-meter reinforced concrete sheet pile dike that will be constructed at the Aglubang-Ibulo rivers junction, costing P61 million, and the 200-lineal-meter dike at Mt. Muyod in Mag-asawang Tubig, costing P4.5 million.

These dikes are meant to control the strong flow of water into Bucayao River, which causes the latter to overflow and flood the City of Calapan and nearby municipalities.

Before the construction of the permanent dikes, the NIA will put gabions at the Bucayao riverbank to prevent the latter from being eroded.

Additional costs

From the initial estimate of P33 million for the 451-meter damage of the earth dike during the Dec. 7 flood, NIA manager Lis Café said P54 million more was now needed since the damage reached 900 meters after the second flood on Dec. 17.

The provincial government announced that P10 million of this amount was already released.

It has already started constructing a 1.2-kilometer dike behind the destroyed earth dike as an emergency measure while the gabion armoring and construction of the permanent dike at the Aglubang-Ibulo rivers junction have not yet started.

This P8-million project, which includes the purchase of 16 hectares of land, will serve as a first line of defense in case of heavy rains and overflowing of the Bucayao River.

Provincial engineer Elever Dilay said the provincial government was targeting to complete this in 20 days.

This will be followed by the rechanelling of the Bucayao River on private property that will be bought by the provincial government.

This P5-million project, to be implemented by the DPWH starting Jan. 15, is meant to straighten and weaken the flow of the river that currently turns very near the dike, causing its damage.

Highway repair

Aside from the dike construction, Panaligan asked for assistance from the national government for the immediate repair of the shoulders, approaches and other damaged areas of the Strong Republic Nautical Highway to avoid accidents.

Engineer Jovy Santos of the DPWH estimated the damage at P22.6 million.

Residents of Barangay Bucayao were curious to see Ms Arroyo and were amused to find that she looked so young.

But the President's visit seemed no big deal to some.

"We're becoming poorer and poorer," said Paulina Matre, a resident of Bucayao.

Vice Gov. Estela Aceron noted that there was really nothing new with the President's visit.

The press conference or media interaction announced earlier was canceled and the President and her entourage quickly left as the rain started to pour at the site. *Marciano T. Virola Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo greets some flood victims in Calapan City who were rescued from floodwaters. LYN RILLON/PDI PHOTO

Mayor sued for murder for slay of radioman

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—THE REGIONAL State Prosecutor's Office has charged with murder a town mayor of Aklan for the killing in 2004 of broadcaster Herson Hinolan after it reinvestigated the case.

In a six-page resolution dated Dec. 5, 2005, Assistant Regional State Prosecutor Virgilio Garcia ordered the filing of murder against Lezo town Mayor Alfredo "Fred" Arcenio at the Aklan Regional Trial Court Branch 2.

The resolution amended the homicide charge filed on March 3, 2005 against Arcenio by the Aklan Provincial Prosecutors Office.

In his resolution, Garcia said that based on testimony given by prosecution witnesses Peter Melgar, Marjorie Icamina and Eddie Etrata, there was probable cause to charge Arcenio with murder. Melgar had earlier claimed that he saw Arcenio shoot Hinolan.

Garcia, who conducted the reinvestigation after the Aklan Provincial Prosecutors Office asked to be inhibited from the case, said there was treachery in the killing of Hinolan.

On May 4, 2005, the Aklan RTC Branch 2 suspended the arraignment of Arcenio and ordered the provincial prosecutor's office to reinvestigate the case after Hinolan's lawyer Napoleon Oducado questioned the resolution.

Hinolan died on Nov. 15, 2004, two days after he was repeatedly shot in the back by a lone gunman outside a carnival at the town proper of Kalibo, Aklan.

He was station manager of dyIN Bombo Radyo in Kalibo and hosted the station's morning program "Bombohanay Bigtime."

Garcia said the shooting "was not only attended with impunity but that the act proceeded from a determined mind..."

He said the accused fired three successive shots at the victim who was unable to defend himself.

Garcia dismissed Arcenio's alibi, supported by testimonies of defense witnesses that he was not in Kalibo during the time Hinolan was shot.

The mayor claimed he was in Numancia and Lezo towns on Nov. 13, 2005 until 3:30 p.m. the next day.

Citing jurisprudence, Garcia said that alibi as a defense "deserves the barest consideration."

BAGUIO'S new pets are shown with wushu players Benjie de Vera, Daniel Parantac, Kariza Kris Chan, and their trainer, Tsing Tsong Tsai. EV ESPIRITU/PDI NORTHERN LUZON

Baguio gets pair of dragons as new 'pets'

BAGUIO CITY—THIS CITY HAS reason to be happy for the New Year. It has a new pair of pets in tow and they will give the city the good luck it badly needs.

Tony Candelaria, known more by his screen name of Tsing Tsong Tsai, said Baguio is only the third city after Manila and Cebu to have a pair of dragons.

"We hope to debut on Jan. 29 when we welcome the Year of the Dog," said Candelaria. "They will bring peace and prosperity to the city."

The dragons are both 70-foot long and cost P80,000 each.

Candelaria said the dragons were given to the Chinese community of the city as a gift from the Chinese government.

"We are deeply honored to have Baguio chosen as recipient," he said.

He said the dragons would be debuting during the local New Year celebration on Jan. 29 as well as the Baguio Flower Festival in February.

The dragons are made of bamboo, wood, rattan, wires, cloth and paper.

A revered dragon traditionally should have the horns of a stag, eyes of a demon, scales of fish, claws of an angle, footpads of a tiger, ears of a bull and whiskers of a cat.

The dragon is associated by the Chinese not only with peace and prosperity but also with longevity, luck, strength, dignity and wisdom.

Traditionally, the longer the dragon the more successful the community becomes, Candelaria said.

"Acquiring the dragon is one thing. Getting people to dance it is another thing," he said.

Candelaria, who was one of the trainers of the victorious wushu sanshou team during last month's Southeast Asian Games, said he is now training 60 people to handle the two dragons.

"We need nine people to hold up the tail with poles and one to handle the head. We need three batches of dancers when they perform because the movements are so exhaustive," he said.

There are also drummers and cymbalists who will set the rhythm and the guide who will entice the dragon with a pearl or a torch at night.

Before getting the dragon, the city only has a pair of dancing lions which have only three dancers working inside them.

Although the routines of the lion are more acrobatic and exhaustive, those of the dragon need more coordination and grace.

"It's like coaching a basketball team rather than a wushu team," Candelaria said. "We are following the Fu Shao style of dragon dancing from Singapore, which is more acrobatic," he added. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Noon marks Pangasinan town's New Year feast

DAGUPAN CITY—WHILE THE rest of the country is catching up on sleep because of New Year's Eve revelry, residents of a village here prepared for their own version of New Year celebration on Jan. 1.

Barangay Pogo Grande is known for being a maker of firecrackers and fireworks and every year the producers and the residents gather together at noon on Jan. 1 to explode unsold firecrackers.

This is the 12th year that this event is done, according to former barangay chair Jojo Ramos.

"Every year, more residents get involved in the merrymaking and more people from other places are coming to join in the celebration," he said.

But this year marks a happy difference.

A *balikbayan* from the village arrived and bought unsold firecrackers from manufacturers so there was no business loss on their part now.

Some residents, including Ramos, also bought thousands of pesos worth of the unsold firecrackers to help the small manufacturers from the village.

Together, the residents tied more than 60,000 pieces of firecrackers, which they hung 10 feet from the ground crisscrossing the main road of the village.

The firecrackers were lighted on one end by a resident. "The explosion lasted about half an hour," Ramos said.

After the "big bang" ended, residents partook of mid-day meals, some of the food were leftover from their media noche.

Junie Coquia, a longtime maker of firecrackers, said he donated his unsold firecrackers and helped set up the strings along the village road.

Children and adults alike milled around the street to enjoy the fireworks. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

US troops to take part in Sulu humanitarian mission

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A BALIKATAN exercise, the same as the one conducted in Basilan in 2002, will start in Sulu this month.

US Col. James Linder, commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JSOTFP), told reporters that more US soldiers will be arriving in Sulu.

"Yes, Balikatan will happen in the next couple of weeks. We will receive additional US forces that will be coming in the area (Sulu)," Linder said.

But he refused to give more details, only saying that a "large amount of money" will be spent by the US government for the activity.

In October last year, Lt. Col. Mark Zimmer, public affairs officer of the JSOTFP, told the INQUIRER that about $700,000 will be used for the exercise. Bulk of the fund, Zimmer said, will be spent on humanitarian projects.

Linder said the US forces who will be in Sulu will be "predominantly engineers, doctors, constructing crews, to build schools, dig some wells, and hopefully move in to (other areas) if we can find great success there."

"We found great success in Basilan and we are hoping to replicate that kind of success in Sulu also. If we can find success there, we would like to extend to other archipelago. We've been in contact with the political leaders and military leaders of Tawi-Tawi," Linder said.

Outgoing Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan said that what the US personnel will be doing in Sulu "is not Balikatan but Bayanihan exercise."

Adan also stressed that the activity simply downplays the issue of strained ties with the US following allegations of US soldiers raping a Filipina in Olongapo City.

On Jan. 17, a month-long joint Philippine-United States anti-terrorism exercise will start in Carmen, North Cotabato. *Julie S. Alipala and Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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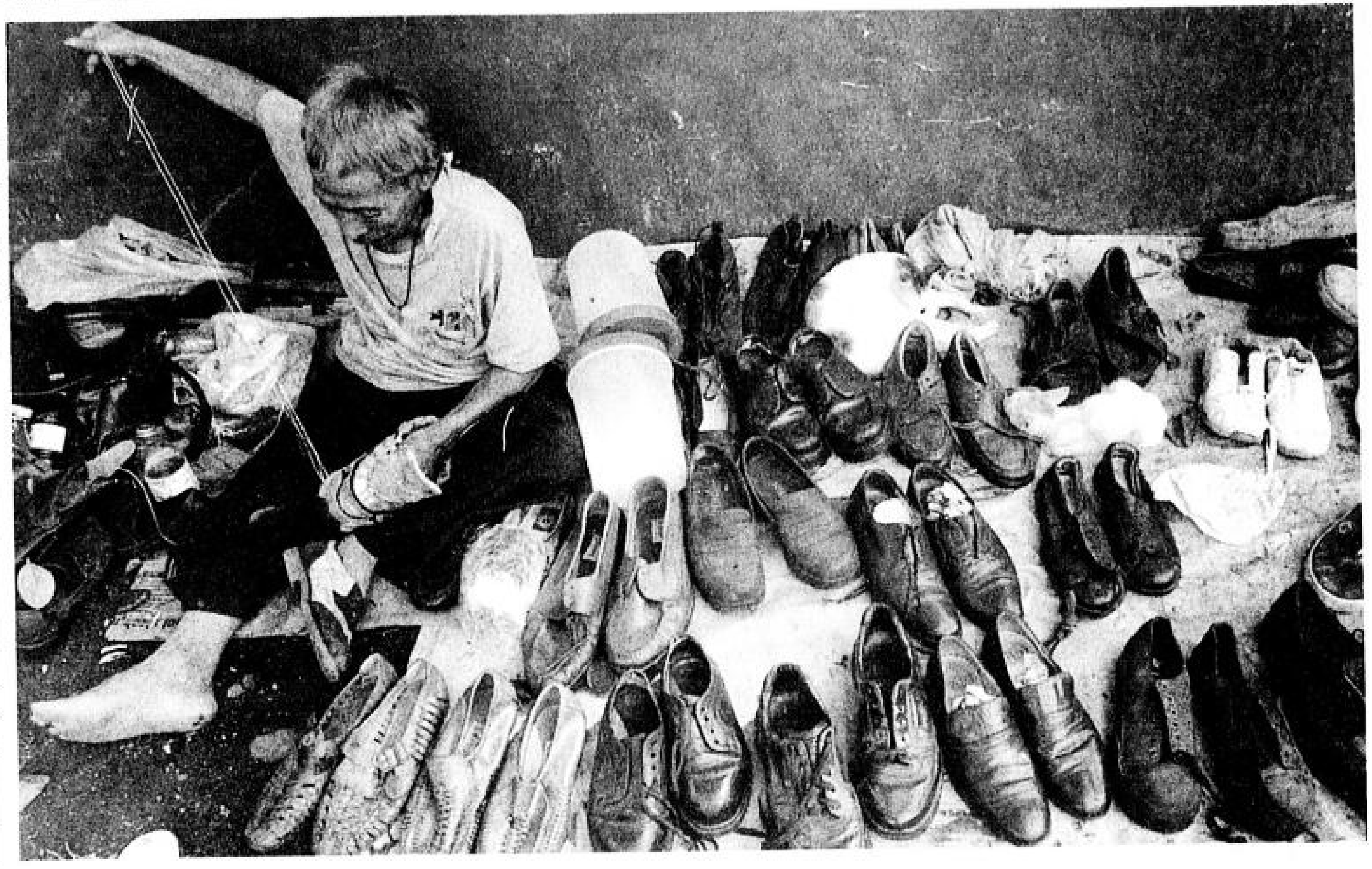

SHOELESS SHOEMAKER
He may be surrounded by shoes but Carlos Ergano, 70, says he cannot afford to buy himself a new pair. Ergano has been repairing shoes for other people for 40 years.
JOAN BONDOC

Boy diagnosed with suspected meningo

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE EMERGENCY ROOM OF THE Amang Rodriguez Medical Center (ARMC) in Marikina City was closed for several hours yesterday morning after a 4-year-old boy admitted to the hospital was diagnosed with the dreaded meningococcemia.

"We stopped operations for about two hours because we had to clean the area," ARMC Director Ricardo Lustre told the INQUIRER.

He also ordered at least 12 physicians, nurses and janitors who came into close contact with the victim to take doses of prophylaxis.

Relatives of the boy, as well as his other neighbors in Barangay Malanday who had contact with him, were also given medicine.

The boy was taken to the hospital at about 10 p.m. Monday because of high fever.

Physicians who treated him "confirmed, based on initial tests" that the boy had the dreaded disease, Lustre said.

From the hospital, he was transferred to the San Lazaro Hospital at about 3:30 a.m. yesterday for proper treatment.

Lustre said the boy appeared to be doing well as he still seemed strong.

"The hospital officials told us it was good we were able to transfer the boy immediately. His chances of surviving are high," Lustre added.

Confirmatory tests to verify if the boy really has meningococcemia will be released in three days.

Aquino murder convict killed by another man?

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A THIRD PARTY MAY HAVE been involved in the killing of one of the 16 soldiers convicted for the murder of opposition politician Benigno Aquino Jr. and Rolando Galman in 1983, said a New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) insider.

Retired police sergeant Cordova Estelo was stabbed dead in the right side, near his chest, by Manuel Ocenar, a fellow inmate at the maximum security compound, on New Year's Eve.

Quoting witnesses, the NBP insider told the INQUIRER yesterday that before Estelo was killed, he grappled with Ocenar for possession of his .25-cal. pistol.

"It is common knowledge here that Ocenar is left handed," he said.

If he had stabbed Estelo with his right hand, then the latter should have sustained a wound in his left side, he noted.

Ocenar, also called "Kalawit" for his deftness with a knife, is the head of the Batang City Jail gang inside the prison.

Estelo's co-inmate, who asked not to be named for security reasons, said that a certain Berting Calamba could have helped out Ocenar during the scuffle and may have been the one who stabbed Estelo.

He had seen Calamba, also a member of the BCJ, drinking with Ocenar all day on Saturday, the inmate told the INQUIRER.

"We haven't seen him around (the maximum compound) after the incident, (it's) as if he's in hiding," said the inmate.

Fr. Robert Olaguer, who had befriended the Aquino-Galman convicts, said that although he has his own theories about the incident, he will wait for the results of the probe being conducted by the NBP's Investigation Section.

"After the investigation is finished, we could compare notes," Olaguer told the INQUIRER.

Another NBP insider said that Estelo's death may have had something to do with the management of the multi-purpose covered court that convicted child rapist and ex-Zamboanga congressman Romeo Jalosjos built for the inmates' use.

Estelo acted as the overseer of the multi-purpose covered court while Ocenar was relieved from his post as the facility's gate officer in mid-December.

The insider added that the BCJ wanted to take control of the covered court.

Recto accuses ex-lover of kidnapping son

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FITNESS EXPERT PLINKY RECTO HAS ACcused her former lover, whom she had already charged with domestic abuse last year, of abducting their one-year-old son in Mandaluyong City yesterday morning.

"The father of my son is a notorious gangster. He kidnapped my son this morning," Recto said yesterday.

Her lawyer announced they were prepared to "do all legal means possible at the soonest possible time" to get the boy back.

What puzzled Recto and her lawyer, Viriato Dupaya, was the court order her former lover carried with him when he took their son from her home at the Wack-Wack Heights Condominium on Lee Street in Barangay Addition Hills.

While Recto filed a case against her lover in the Mandaluyong City Regional Trial last year, it now turns out that he also filed a case against her in Negros Occidental.

Both cases cited the same law, Republic Act 9262, which is known as the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004.

The father, a wealthy lawyer in Negros Occidental, easily walked past the security guards of the usually strictly secured compound, armed with a court order from the Regional Trial Court Branch 62 in Bago City, Negros Occidental.

He was assisted by a court sheriff and at least eight operatives of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-National Capital Region, Recto said.

"He had a court order which he showed to our officer-in-charge. We had no choice but to let him in," a security guard told the INQUIRER.

In his petition before the Bago City RTC, Recto's former lover claimed she has not been a responsible mother, always leaving their son to the care of their maids.

Recto's friends quickly said the contents of the petition, a copy of which they obtained only yesterday, were "not true."

Judge Henry Trocino granted Recto's former lover "temporary custody" of their son as well as a 30-day protection order barring her from going near him, based on court documents Recto showed to reporters.

Ironically, Recto had also secured a 30-day temporary protection order against her former lover from the Mandaluyong City Regional Trial Court last year.

"We will question the propriety of the temporary protection order. We will file the appropriate legal remedies," Dapaya said.

Her former lover arrived about 10:30 a.m. yesterday while she was in a meeting at the Ateneo De Manila University in Quezon City, Recto said.

"We begged him not to take the baby because Ms Plinky was not here. But he just yelled back at us," one of Recto's two housemaids told investigators.

Rebellion case hits another snag

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE PROCEEDINGS IN THE REBELLION CASE filed against terror suspects were stalled anew yesterday after the new judge handling the case ordered its transfer to another family court.

Makati Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 144 Judge Evelyn Arcaya-Chua announced in open court that she was inhibiting herself from the case, involving alleged members and leaders of the Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), out of delicadeza.

"The judge feels that since she has a pending case in the DOJ (Department of Justice) where she is the respondent in her personal capacity, she might as well voluntarily inhibit herself," said lawyer Raymund Palad, one of the private defense counsel.

"The DOJ can either recommend the filing or dismissal of the case against her, so, to forestall any doubt that she will be biased in this [rebellion] case... she decided to inhibit herself," Palad explained.

The rebellion case against the RSM and ASG members was filed by the DOJ in November. The suspects included alleged RSM leader Hilarion Santos, his wife Hannah, a 17-year-old girl and ASG leader Khadaffy Janjalani. They were accused of involvement in several bombing attacks which had taken place in Metro Manila and key cities in the provinces.

The case had been transferred to Arcaya-Chua's sala from a regular court in December after the defense proved that one of the accused was a minor. Court rules require designated family courts to handle cases involving minors.

With the judge's announcement, the case would again be re-raffled to Makati RTC's three remaining family courts.

"We can't do anything, it's the right of the judge to voluntarily inhibit themselves," Palad said.

METROBRIEFS

Murder suspects charged

THE MAKATI Police Department (MPD) has filed charges of murder and attempted murder against 11 robbery suspects who killed a Makati policeman last week. Charged were Felix Ponting, Allan Capuno, Rychie Sevilla, Armando Villanueva, Roselyn Blanca, who were all arrested by the police, and six other unidentified suspects who remain at large. An additional charge of illegal possession of explosives was filed against Blanca, as the police found an M26 fragmentation grenade inside her bag when they arrested her. The charges were filed in the Makati City Prosecutor's Office on Saturday, two days after PO3 Avelino Santos died while on patrol at around 10 a.m. on Dec. 28. Santos had approached the vehicle after he noticed that the occupants were acting suspiciously. The suspects, however, pulled him inside the vehicle and shot him dead. Senior Supt. Efren Ysulat, MPD Deputy Chief for Administration, said Santos would soon be recommended for posthumous promotion.

Tarra V. Quismundo

Not the weaker sex

A SUSPECTED robber got more than he bargained for when he tried to grab the gun of a policewoman inside a passenger bus in Caloocan City at around Monday noon. PO1 Marilou Ricardo, 27, assigned at the National Capital Region Maritime Group, reacted quickly when Raymond Bulla, 26, tried to take her gun which was in a holster hanging on her waist. "Had the suspect succeeded in snatching the firearm, he could have used it to rob the bus passengers," the investigator, SPO1 Ferdinand Sarmiento, said in his report. "The policewoman reacted by twisting the arm of the suspect who screamed in pain," one of the witnesses told the police. The suspect tried to fight back but he proved no match for Ricardo, a hand-to-hand combat expert. Other bus passengers also helped subdue Bulla. Found in his pockets were sachets which were later found to contain shabu.

Nancy C. Carvajal

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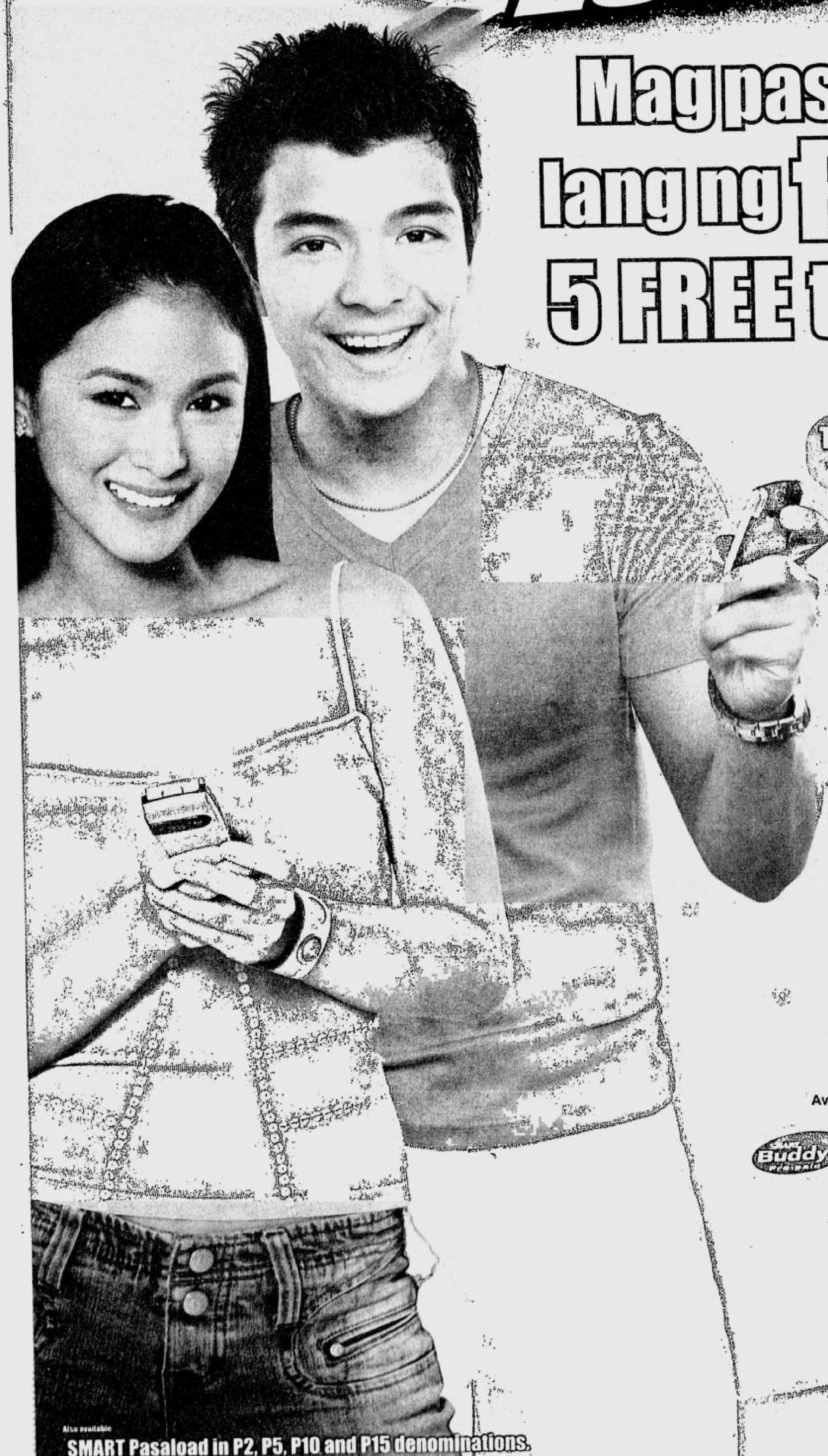

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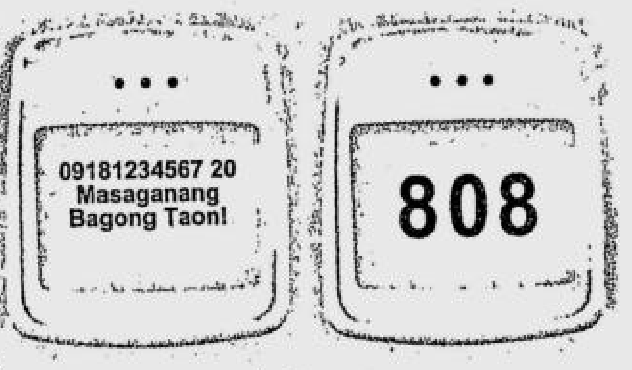

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Gin Kings, Barako seek semis berth

Phone Pals take on Express

REFRESHED BY THE CHRISTmas holiday break, Red Bull Barako and Barangay Ginebra dispute the second and last semifinal slot today at the resumption of the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference at the Cuneta Astrodome.

The Barako and the Gin Kings split their matches in the conference, where they finished the classification round with identical 9-7 records.

But the Barako will have to adapt to a different type of opponent, which is far from the up-and-down Gin Kings they met in the preliminaries.

Chris Porter has been giving the Gin Kings an added leverage inside the paint after replacing Sean Lampley while Marc Caguioa's game is peaking at the right time.

"They're a different team from the one we battled before because of their import," said Red Bull Barako coach Yeng Guiao. "But we've proven ourselves against them and the biggest thing now is to win the playoff."

The winner of the 7:25 p.m. contest books an automatic ticket together with early qualifier Purefoods Chunkee in the best-of-five semifinals.

The loser settles for a quarterfinal slot along with the winner of the Talk 'N Text-Air21 clash earlier at 4:40 p.m.

With a possible replacement waiting in the wings, Quemont Greer will have to prove his worth and convince the Red Bull management that changing imports in midstream is not advisable.

GAMES TODAY
(Cuneta Astrodome)
4:40 p.m.—Talk 'N Text vs Air21
7:25 p.m.—Red Bull Barako vs Barangay Ginebra

Greer has been complaining of knee and foot ailments as reasons for his mediocre performances lately, forcing team officials to put 6-foot-6 James Penny on stand by.

Enrico Villanueva, Mick Pennisi and Paolo Bugia will have their hands full containing the Ginebra frontline while Lordy Tugade, Junthy Valenzuela and rookie Larry Fonacier must find ways to stop Jayjay Helterbrand and Caguioa.

"For sure they will try to stop our big men and guards but we're ready to make adjustments anytime," said Barangay Ginebra coach Siot Tanquingcen, whose Kings made the playoff after beating the Alaska Aces on Christmas day.

"Right now, we're working on our executions. I'm sure it will be a fast game," he added.

But if there's one thing that motivates the Kings to beat the Barako, it's their hunger for revenge after Red Bull eliminated the crowd favorites in the quarterfinals last conference.

"We don't want that to happen again. Aside from the semifinal seat, pride is also at stake," said Tanquingcen.

The winning team will enjoy a three-week rest and the luxury of watching the fight for survival in the wildcard and quarterfinal rounds. *June Navarro*

ERIC Menk is expected to carry the load for Ginebra again. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

120 solons want PSC budget increased

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THINGS ARE FINALLY LOOKING UP FOR Philippine sports.

As an offshoot of the country's winning the 23rd Southeast Asian Games last month, at least 120 congressmen have signed a resolution increasing the budget for RP sports to as high as P250 million a year.

Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella said the new budget for the Philippine Sports Commission is "a done deal" because among the signatories are members of the powerful House budget and appropriations committee.

"We also presume that the senators will join us in this crusade as a reward for the superb performance of our athletes," said Puentevella, who is also the vice president of the Philippine Olympic Committee.

The PSC budget, which has been cut drastically by the past administrations, is currently at an all-time low of P26 million from as high as P200 million during the time of President Ramos.

"After getting more than 120 signatories we feel very optimistic that the PSC budget is now a done deal. I thank all our colleagues especially in the appropriations committee," Puentevella said.

"We now must move forward toward greater heights. Our athletes need this essential push to attain our objective, be it in the forthcoming Asian Games or the Olympics in 2008," added Puentevella, who also served as PSC commissioner for a record seven years.

The resolution came on the heels of President Macapagal-Arroyo's renewed call to support RP sports with emphasis on 10 disciplines that could give the country its first Olympic gold in Beijing two years from now.

"This move will show our athletes that we are not only with them when we celebrate their victories in behalf of the nation but also that we are fully supportive of them when they prepare and train for future competitions in order to bring more honor and prestige to our country," Puentevella said.

Aside from the national athletes' monthly stipend and meal allowances, the PSC spends for the upkeep of the government-owned sports facilities like the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex and the Philsports in Pasig.

The agency also gets a monthly share from the earnings of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation amounting to an average of P22 million to fund the training of the national athletes through the National Sports Development Fund.

The SEAG-winning athletes have been rewarded cash incentives on top of an all-expense paid trip to Hong Kong Disneyland through the First Gentleman's Foundation.

2 more crack sparmates in Morales camp

MORALES AP

A PAIR OF FORMER WORLD-ranked fighters have been commissioned yesterday by Erik "El Terrible" Morales to spar with him at the Queretaro Mountains as he plunges into the most crucial weeks of training for his Jan. 21 rematch with Filipino champion Manny Pacquiao.

The latest addition brings to seven the number of sparmates—all southpaws—who take turns in honing the boxing skills of the three-division former world champion from Tijuana, Mexico.

American Freddie Norwood, who reigned as WBA featherweight champ from 1998 to 2000, and Daniel Attah, a Nigerian super featherweight, have arrived at the Queretaro to join Morales and his team of fighters and physical conditioning coaches.

Already in the camp with Morales are Raymundo "Panadero" Gonzalez, Pirri Leyva and Betillo Guttierez. Set to arrive this week to join them are Steven Luevano and Fernando "Wary" Belran.

Raul Robles, Morales' physical conditioning coach, revealed last Saturday that his ward had run the well-known Cerro del Cubilete (Hill of the Tumblers) in Mexico, a nine-kilometer ascent, and did it in a little more than one hour.

Meanwhile, Pacquiao is reportedly holding a teleconference with members of the media today from his base at the Wild Card Gym. The Filipino star will answer queries from journalists, who will be briefed on his preparations for the rematch.

Morales, for his part, is set to hold his teleconference tomorrow from his training base in Mexico. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

PSA renews ties with regular backer

A LONGTIME PARTNER OF LOCAL SPORTS IS AGAIN lending a big hand when the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) honors the top sports achievers of 2005 during its Annual Awards Night on Jan. 14 at the Manila Pavilion.

For the nth time, Photokina marketing, the company behind top energy drink Red Bull, renewed its partnership with the country's sportswriting fraternity, which made the victorious Team Philippines in the recent 23rd Southeast Asian Games its Athlete of the Year for 2005.

Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr. will be the guest of honor and speaker the two-hour award rites also expected to be graced by the country's other top sports officials.

"Again we appreciate the whole-hearted support Photokina is extending us in ensuring that the Annual Awards Night will be a big success again," said PSA president Jimmy Cantor of Malaya. "We are also grateful to Mr. George Chua for helping us again."

Chua is the executive vice president of Photokina, a regular sponsor of the yearly awards rites, while Red Bull has been a constant supporter of the weekly PSA Forum.

Tapped to host this year's affair, to be shown on a delayed basis over NBN-4, is amateur basketball star Alex Compton and popular sports broadcaster Patricia Bermudez-Hizon.

Charming diver Shiela Mae Perez, winner of three gold medals in the biennial meet, will accept the huge trophy in behalf of Team Philippines, which captured the overall title for the first time since it began competing in the SEA Games in 1977.

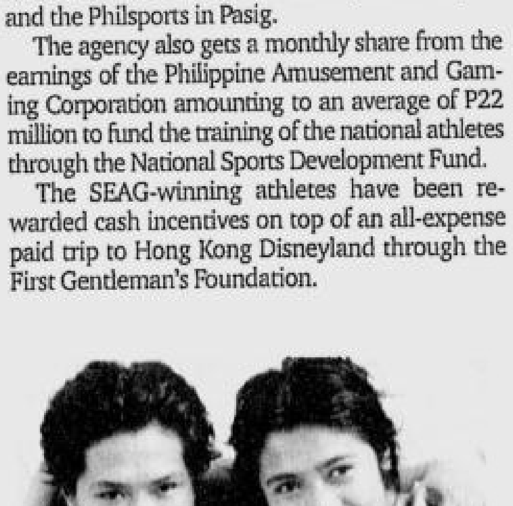
Twenty two athletes, among them boxing sensation Manny Pacquiao, golf star Jennifer Rosales and Perez, will be the recipients of major awards from the country's oldest media organization.

All the 113 gold medal winners in the SEA Games on the other hand, will be bestowed special citations.

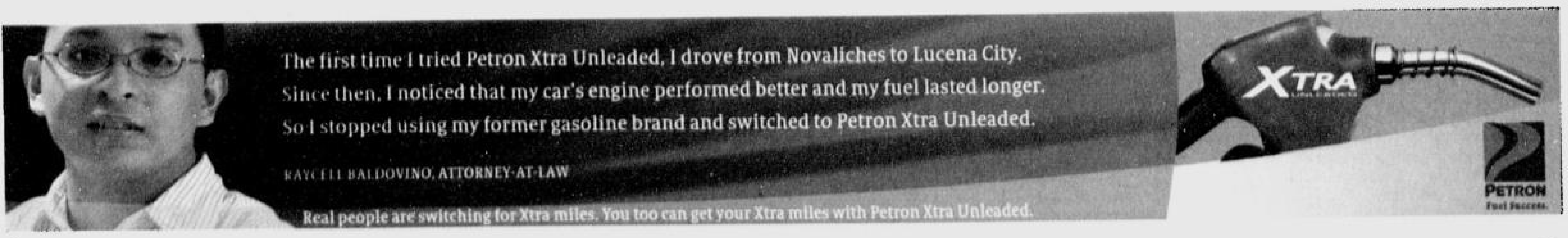
Heading the list of entities and personalities to be given citations is San Miguel Corp. which doled out P100 million to the First Gentleman's Foundation as part of the athletes' training for the SEA Games.

For scoring a six gold-medal romp in the SEA Games, the Philippine Dragon Boat Federation was unanimously voted as the most outstanding national sports association while the Philippine Paralympics team will be handed out a special award.

The Para Games RP contingent bagged a record 22 gold medals in the 3rd ASEAN Para Games.



AWARDEES: SEA Games triple gold medalist Shiela Mae Perez (right) with synchronized springboard partner Ceseil Domenios. AP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Real people are switching for Xtra miles. You too can get your Xtra miles with Petron Xtra Unleaded.

Z GORRES (right) and Czar Amonsot, in sweatshirts due to the cold LA weather, will start training under Freddie Roach today. PHILBOXING.COM

Roach trains Gorres, Amonsot

TOP-RANKED ORIENTAL AND PACIFIC Boxing Federation super flyweight Z Gorres and WBO Asia Pacific super featherweight king Cezar Amonsot start their rigid training today under ace trainer Freddie Roach at the American's Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles.

Filipino trainer Edito "Ala" Villamor, in a message to Philboxing.com, said Gorres and Amonsot will finally be going through serious gym training after doing mostly jogging, skipping rope and shadow-boxing since their arrival last Dec. 27.

"Despite the holiday season where parties and foods were in abundance, Gorres and Amonsot strictly adhered to their desciplined diet by avoiding sweet and fatty foods to maintain their training weights," Villamor told Philboxing.com.

There is a strong possibility that Samuel Lopez, who is a protegé of Guilty Promotions and earlier lined up to face Gorres, may not be fighting the Filipino as the promoter has not confirmed their encounter.

But Amonsot's date with Arturo Quintero has already been decided.

Gorres and Amonsot are scheduled to spar tomorrow against separate boxers, although the bigger Amonsot will most likely not spar with Manny Pacquiao because of his southpaw stance.

Pacquiao is also training at the Wild Card gym for his rematch on Jan. 21 with Morales, who is a right-hander.

Gorres and Amonsot will train two weeks at the Wild Card gym and then will motor to Las Vegas for the last phase of their training for their fight on Feb 3.

While in Las Vegas, former JMP trainer Tony Martin will play host to the fighters. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

Record-breakers look forward to cash bonuses

By Marc Anthony Reyes

IS THERE A CASH INCENTIVE FOR BREAKING A Southeast Asian Games record?

Arneil Ferreira, one of only two Filipino athletes to set a new SEAG mark during the recent Games, asked this question yesterday from his hometown in Cauayan, Negros Occidental, a three-hour ride from Bacolod City.

"I heard that there could be a cash incentive for the record breakers," said the 24-year-old thrower, who hurled the men's hammer to a distance of 60.47 meters, erasing the 12-year-old record of 58.80m set by Wong Tee Kui of Malaysia.

He told the INQUIRER that he didn't want to sound materialistic, but Philippine Sports Commissioner Ambrosio de Luna had told him that an incentive for SEAG record-breakers can be worked out.

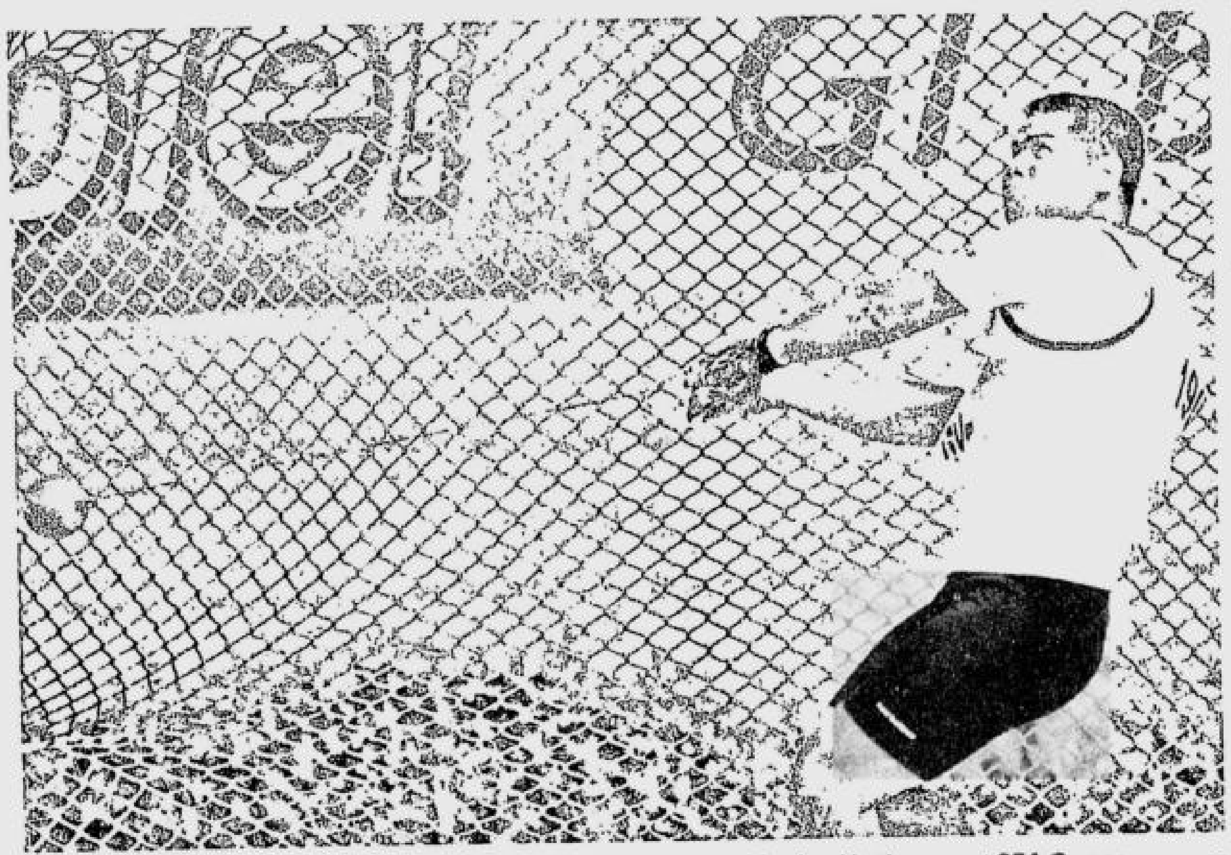
The only other Filipino athlete to match Ferreira's feat was long jumper Henry Dagmil, who cleared 9.81m to better the old mark of 7.79m.

"It's okay to win a gold medal in the SEA Games, but winning it in record fashion is something special because you managed to raise the bar of competition," said Ferreira, who was recently promoted from Airman second class to Airman first class in the Philippine Air Force.

The soft-spoken Ferreira rued the fact that he and Dagmil have been overlooked in favor of fellow athletes who won multiple gold medals in the biennial Games.

Ferreira, who received P100,000 and joined the First Gentleman Foundation-sponsored trip to Hong Kong for his golden performance, said he would use the money for training in case he can't find a sponsor for this year's Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

The two-time SEAG champion is flying back to Manila today after treating his parents and relatives to a New Year party in Cauayan.



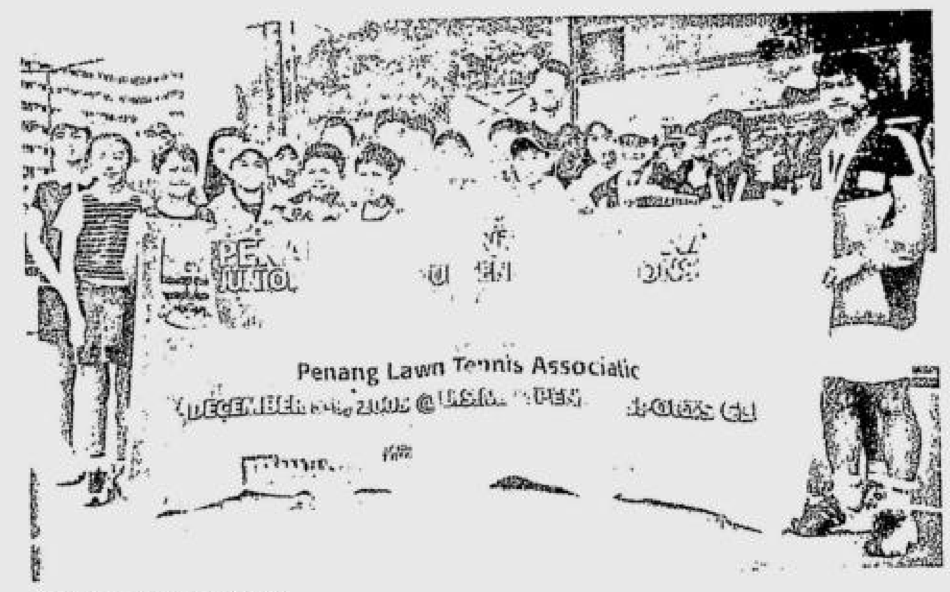
WAITING FOR WORD: Arneil Ferreira sets up for his record-breaking haul in the recent SEA Games. AP

"I shared my blessings with the people who have been praying for me," said Ferreira, who also won a gold in the Vietnam SEAG in 2003. "But I saved half of my prize money. I also need to save for the future."

He was attending high school in St. Columban's Academy when his throwing skills were discovered. He developed them further in national-level competitions while representing Binalbagan Catholic College.

Ferreira said the current Asian Games standard of 78 meters and the continental record of 84 meters were way off his personal best.

But Ferreira, who in his first SEAG stint in 2001 threw 50 meters, said he has been improving at a rate of five meters every two years. This, he agrees, could only mean something good for him in Doha or even in the Beijing Olympics in 2008.



BIG IN MALAYSIA

Filipino junior netters Sally Mae Siso, Jacob Lagman, Bernardine Siso, Roman Floreza and Martina Guba join the other winners in the recent Selangor International Age Group Tennis Championships. The Philippine team was represented in the international competition by the Milo squad of champions.

Adidas tennis circuit expands college roster

COLLEGIATE STANDOUTS FROM THE south dominated the final tournament of the 2005 Adidas Tennis Circuit held last month at the Alta Vista courts in Cebu City.

Janji Soquino of the University of Cebu Webmaster, Floreza Alesna of the University of San Carlos, Macy Solon of Dumaguete University and University of the Visayas' Karl Canete and Francis Largo ruled their respective divisions.

Meanwhile, the Adidas Tennis Challenge incorporated several inter-collegiate tournaments in its calendar last year and gave the powerhouse collegiate squads another arena to strut their stuff.

University of Santo Tomas, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, La Salle, San Beda, San Sebastian and the University of the Philippines, to name a few, have all seen action in the circuit and figured prominently.

Other schools from the UAAP and the NCAA are expected to sign up this year.

The Adidas netfest, organized by the CTW with support from Milo, Globe Gentext and Snickers, also held events in Cagayan de Oro, Mandaluyong Tennis Club, UP-Diliman Tennis Club and at the Eusebio Tennis Club in Pasig last year.

Secretary Reyes, Mayor Atienza versus barangay fascist

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

ONCE WE HAVE A WAR, THERE IS ONLY one thing to do. It must be won.

That's not Manny Pacquiao making a vow for his biggest fight, one he can't afford to lose against Mexican Erik Morales, in Las Vegas later this month.

That's Ernest Hemingway, stressing a time-honored theme, in his introduction to "Men at War," a collection of the best war stories of all time, featuring Leo Tolstoy, T.E. Lawrence, William Faulkner, Winston Churchill, Stephen Crane and others.

Hemingway insisted that victory was an utmost necessity because defeat "brings worse things than any that can ever happen in a war."

* * *

Well, this one is about a small battle.

It's about how victory was initially achieved by a group of poor jeepney drivers, who used to be terrorized by a fascist barangay chair in that right-hand area after the Lambingan Bridge in Santa Ana, Manila.

The drivers, who ply the Vergara-Kanto stretch in Mandaluyong, started the year feeling very thankful now that the dreaded barangay official, Kaulayaw "Laying" Espinosa, had been forced to momentarily give back their right to pick up and unload passengers in the busy corner right after the Lambingan Bridge.

Members of the Vergara Drivers Association, now headed by hard-hitting Bening Santos, have been assured by no less than Interior and Local Governments Secretary Angelo Reyes that he would not allow their rights to be trampled upon.

* * *

"I cannot tolerate that," Reyes said upon reading here about the criminal practice of Espinosa, who had refused rightful passage to the said drivers, while allowing "illegals" from the Boni Avenue route to use the busy spot as a terminal.

"I can't allow poor drivers to be victims in this case," Reyes explained.

True enough, a DILG team was sent to investigate what had been initially reported here about the malpractice.

To repeat, the shameless style of Espinosa, who continues to milk drivers who don't have official access to the passenger-rich spot, had turned that choked "area in old Panaderos into a devil's gymnasium."

"*Kalmante ngayon*, everything OK," reported Santos, the newly installed head of the drivers from Barangay Vergara in riverside Mandaluyong.

By calm, Santos meant the drivers under his association are no longer accosted, threatened and driven by stick-wielding toughies away from the passenger pick-up area.

These toughies, of course, have mastered their fascist ways under Espinosa, who feed them crumbs from his enormous piggy bank that's regularly filled with bribes from the "illegals."

* * *

You see, this case indeed looks and sounds very petty.

It's no battle at all, if we go by the wars Hemingway spoke of.

However, official records would bear that Vergara drivers are really the ones who have rightful access to the pick-up area after Lambingan.

But through the machinations of Espinosa, the scheming barangay head, nearly 300 jeepneys with no lawful tickets to pass through the foot of Lambingan going to Mandaluyong, are allowed to cheat and thereby regularly clog traffic.

Espinosa, in demanding bribes from Santos so his members could continue using the terminal, had openly admitted to the head of the Vergara drivers how much he takes from four Boni Avenue associations every week.

* * *

The odd thing here is that, after the DILG had paid him a visit, Espinosa obviously thought he could go on his mulcting ways, now that he had also allowed the Vergara jeepneys their rightful access to the terminal.

But knowing Secretary Reyes, he knows there's no such thing as half-baked victories.

Last heard of, Reyes has assigned Feliciano Regis of the DILG civil affairs section to investigate Espinosa.

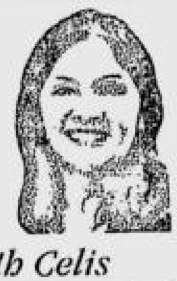
"Once we are through with the probe, we forward our findings to the City Mayor of Manila, who will make the necessary moves," Regis told the INQUIRER.

Knowing Mayor Lito Atienza, he won't think twice before turning that initial win into a full-scale victory for the oppressed drivers.

Atienza won't allow these small people to be defeated again.

Lina not giving up on BAP

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

JUST AS HE HAD threatened the last time I saw him, Talk 'N Text cager Asi Taulava showed up with wife Ana May at Mia Concio's birthday party sporting his old blond hairdo.

In a previous social gathering which he attended about two weeks earlier, some friends teased Asi about how his close-cropped hair and stubby beard had accentuated his dark features and made him look like a terrorist.

Right then and there, Asi declared he would color his hair yellow again.

Asi said he went from blonde to brunette—his natural hair color—hoping the "*pahiyang*" would change his luck. At that time, he was having enormous problems with his citizenship documents. After that was settled, he had to contend with PBA commissioner Noli Eala, who refused to allow him to play.

* * *

Although the round of socials during the Christmas season failed to produce a major column item, the informal discussions were lively and interesting, perhaps mainly because the guests we encountered were just as equally interesting.

At Mia's party for example, which was held at the sprawling Concio residence at La Vista in Quezon City, I met Solar Entertainment Corp. head honcho William Cheng and COO Peter Chianliong for the first time. It was also the first time that I learned Solar was airing the forthcoming Pacquiao-Morales rematch over ABS-CBN, and not RPN-9 where most of the Pacquiao fights had been telecast.

All night long, columnist Ronnie Nathanielsz, who shared our table, tried to pin down Peter for the "real" reason behind the shift, but all the Solar official would say was that ABS-CBN had expressed its interest to air the fight, and the offer was one that could not be refused.

Ronnie was unconvinced. Mia, who is president of RPN-9, showed no reaction.

* * *

Meanwhile, former PBA marketing manager Robbie Puno, who now hosts a radio program, was eager to be updated on the state of Philippine basketball.

He asked for a prediction. Will the BAP be reinstated in the POC? Will the ban on the Philippines finally be lifted?

No one at our table could provide an answer. But Ronnie Nathanielsz did remind everyone that BAP president Joey Lina had been given a March deadline by Fiba secretary general Patrick Baumann to come up with a new, revitalized BAP.

No wonder I heard from someone, somewhere that Joey is very busy these days, drafting a new constitution and by-laws for the organization. This same person also said a revamp is imminent and warned me not to be surprised if and when the new table of organization is announced to the public.

* * *

I had hoped to bump into Chot Reyes at Mia's party, because last year he was there. I've often wondered why Chot has so far not resumed his coaching post at Coke.

I wanted to ask him if the national team was still practicing and how he was keeping himself busy in the face of the continuing national basketball crisis.

But Chot didn't show up. His close buddy Butch Antonio did, however, so I posed the questions to him instead. Butch talked about a projected tourney for Chot and the national team early this year, but that's just about all he could say. He asked why I wasn't at the Butch Maniego event which raised exactly P157,000 for the ailing PBL official who is undergoing dialysis and needs a kidney transplant ASAP.

* * *

Of course, we had to touch on the controversial Ateneo-La Salle Dream Game organized by Vintage, Bobong Velez being on the same table, right in the midst of several Ateneo alumni and Blue Eagles coach Norman Black who was seated next to him. Norman said the Eagles are now immersed in training for the next UAAP season. No, there was no pressure nor negative feedback from the Ateneo alumni and for this, Norman considers himself very lucky.

Now I can't remember what party it was where I picked up the report that San Miguel Beer import Kevin Freeman and actress Jackie Forster are back in each other's arms again, despite her pregnancy. From what I gathered, Kevin is willing to serve as father of Jackie's child, who had been abandoned by its model-father. According to our source, the only problem is, Kevin might be replaced soon by the import he replaced, Kwan Johnson, who has recovered from his injury. San Miguel lost two games in a row with Kevin at the helm.

I must've sat two hours right beside Franz Pumaren at a New Year's Day luncheon, but we hardly touched on the eligibility controversy which is awaiting closure pending the UAAP board's decision.

"Do you think La Salle will be suspended?" I asked Franz who resigned his coaching job about two months ago.

"Do you think it will be?" he answered.

Knicks shade Suns in triple overtime

NEW York's Stephon Marbury tries to shake off Steve Nash with a behind-the-back dribble. REUTERS

NEW YORK—STEPHON Marbury poured in 32 points, including seven in the third overtime period, to guide the New York Knicks to a 140-133 win over the Phoenix Suns at Madison Square Garden on Monday.

Jamal Crawford contributed 29 points and seven rebounds to the New York effort while David Lee added a career-high 23 points and 15 rebounds and Eddy Curry helped out with 20 points and 15 boards as the Knicks recorded just their second win in 12 games.

Shawn Marion hit for a season-high 39 points and 14 boards for Phoenix while Steve Nash had 28 points and a season best 22 assists as the Suns fell for the first time in five games.

The Knicks finally wrestled control of the contest in the third overtime, which opened with Curry nailing a three-pointer to put New York on top 130-127.

Clinging to a 133-131 lead, Marbury scored seven straight points as the Knicks opened up a 140-131 cushion then held on to register a victory in their first triple-overtime game since Feb. 14, 1993.

It was a well-deserved victory for the struggling Knicks, who led much of the contest, constructing a 13-point advantage early in the third quarter.

The Suns, however, responded with 12-5 run, clawing their way back into the contest and briefly retaking the lead late in the fourth at 104-102 before Curry drained a pair of clutch free throws in the final seconds to send the game into overtime.

In Indianapolis, Fred Jones scored a season-high 26 points and Stephen Jackson added 22 as the Indiana Pacers rolled to a 115-96 win over the Seattle SuperSonics.

Sarunas Jasikevicius also helped out with a career best 20 points as the Pacers ended a four game losing skid.

Ray Allen led the SuperSonics with 24 points.

In Oklahoma City, Chris Paul scored 24 points and dished out 11 assists and David West added 20 points and nine rebounds, sparking the New Orleans Hornets to a 103-86 win over the Charlotte Bobcats.

In Chicago, Michael Redd scored 29 points and Maurice Williams added 13 points and nine assists as the Milwaukee Bucks claimed a 93-92 win over the struggling Chicago Bulls, which slumped to their seventh straight defeat.

In Denver, Kenyon Martin had 24 points and Carmelo Anthony chipped in with 23 as the Nuggets pulled out of a three game losing skid with 120-110 win over the Boston Celtics.

O'Neal sidelined

Meanwhile, in Indianapolis, Pacers All-Star forward Jermaine O'Neal has pneumonia and team officials were uncertain here Monday when he would play or practice with the National Basketball Association team.

O'Neal did not play in a 115-96 victory over Seattle and together with the absence of Ron Artest, inactive since demanding a trade, the Pacers are without two of their major players. *Reuters*

Americans rally to trip Russians

PERTH, AUSTRALIA—THE United States battled back from the loss of the first singles match to overcome Russia 2-1 in round-robin competition at the Hopman Cup on Tuesday.

The victory was the second for the United States in the mixed team tournament after they had defeated Serbia and Montenegro by the same score on Sunday.

Svetlana Kuznetsova gave Russia the lead by beating Lisa Raymond 6-4 6-1 but Taylor Dent responded for the Americans, defeating Yuri Schukin 6-2 6-0 before the pair teamed up to clinch the tie with a 6-4 6-1 mixed doubles victory.

Former US Open champion Kuznetsova made a sluggish start, allowing Raymond to hold points to win the first five games by exploiting the lack of depth in the Russian's shots and her succession of unforced errors.

However, the American was only able to convert on one of her eight break points in the match, in the opening game, and Kuznetsova seized on Raymond's profligacy to turn the contest around.

Putting more weight into her shots and finding the range with her serve, Kuznetsova was able to break back and level at 3-3, and then broke again for the set with a winning lob.

In the second set, Kuznetsova held off four break points to lead 1-0, broke with a stunning forehand winner down the line to lead 2-0 and then broke to love to lead 5-1 before finishing with her ninth ace.

"I really enjoyed today's match," Kuznetsova said.

"I didn't play since Zurich in October so I was a bit stiff at the start, nervous, did many mistakes. But then I got my game going and I was pretty happy out there."

Dent began as an overwhelming favorite against 299th-ranked Schukin, who was the third choice for Russia after injuries to Marat Safin and Teimuraz Gabashvili. *Reuters*

Old foes welcome Hingis back

HONG KONG—WORLD NO. 1 Lindsay Davenport and the Williams sisters on Tuesday welcomed Martina Hingis' tennis comeback, with Serena Williams saying she's rooting for the five-time Grand Slam singles winner and Davenport observing that her return is good for the sport.

"I was actually really excited to hear that Hingis was going to come back. Honestly, she was such a great player in her time and her time is still our time," Serena Williams told reporters ahead of Hong Kong's Champions Challenge exhibition tournament, which begins Wednesday.

"I'm actually rooting for her unless, of course, she plays me," she said.

Her older sister Venus was likewise enthusiastic and predicted Hingis will perform well.

"I think anything that's an addition to women's tennis is awesome and I think she'll do well," she said.

Davenport said Hingis' return to competitive tennis will draw more attention to the women's game.

"I think it adds another great story line to women's tennis and I think it's going to be very interesting to see how she comes back after a couple of years away from the game," she said.

HINGIS is all smiles after her doubles victory with Tatiana Golovin. AP

Davenport was diplomatic when asked if Hingis could climb back to the top echelons of women's tennis.

"I mean, each player is definitely unique and different so we'll obviously see in the next few months how Martina is able to cope with that, so it's very hard to say now," she said.

"I think that it's a very, very tough sport. Obviously Martina has been one of the best players that has ever played, so I'm sure she wouldn't be coming back unless she felt like she could make this transition," Davenport said.

Hingis, who retired in 2002 because of foot, heel and ankle injuries, won her first match since her comeback Monday, beating Venezuela's Maria Vento-Kabchi 6-2, 6-1 in the first round of the Australian women's hardcourt championship on the Gold Coast. She will play in the Australian Open, which she has won three times.

The Swiss player has said the standard of women's tennis has risen since she left the game and that she has to improve.

Others in the field of eight women in Hong Kong are reigning US Open champion Belgian Kim Clijsters, world No. 8 Russian Elena Dementieva, India's Sania Mirza, the Czech Republic's Nicole Vaidisova and China's Zheng Jie.

The Williams sisters said they are feeling physically fit after being bogged down by injuries late last year.

Serena won the Australian Open in 2005 and Venus won Wimbledon, but the sisters faded later in the year, with neither qualifying for the season-ending WTA Championships. Serena played only 28 matches all year.

"Injuries are part of sports, but right now, (I'm) solid," Venus Williams said.

Davenport, who turns 30 in June, dismissed talk of retirement. *AP*

Chance for lesser lights as Tiger, Phil, Ernie and Retief sit out 1st PGA event

LOS ANGELES—IN THE ABSENCE OF TIGER Woods, Phil Mickelson and Ernie Els, the game's lesser lights have a chance to make an impact this week at the PGA Tour's season-opening Mercedes Championships in Hawaii.

World number two Vijay Singh, who faded to fifth in last year's tournament after leading for the first three days, is the only member of the world's top five in the elite field at the Kapalua Resort.

Top-ranked Woods, champion in 1997 and 2000, has decided to skip his usual early-season event to spend more time at home after playing a full schedule last year.

"I just need some time away from the game," the US Masters and British Open champion said on his official website.

"As much as I enjoy going to Kapalua Resort, it's been a long season and I have played a lot of golf. I need a break to recharge my batteries, let my body heal and hang out with family and friends."

Woods, who celebrated his 30th birthday three days ago, will launch his 2006 campaign at the Buick Invitational in La Jolla, California later this month.

US PGA champion Mickelson, twice a winner of the Mercedes Championships when it was staged at La Costa Country Club in Carlsbad, California, has opted to miss this week's event for the fourth time in five years.

In 2004, the San Diego resident was not eligible to play in the tournament that brings together all the winners from the previous PGA Tour season.

South African Els, champion at Kapalua's

VIJAY: Only elite player in field.

Plantation Course in 2003 with a record tournament aggregate of 261 and runner-up to Woods there in 2000, is another notable absentee this week, along with compatriot Retief Goosen, the world number four.

Fifth-ranked Els will miss the first two events of the PGA Tour season in an attempt to improve on his disappointing form at last year's majors.

'Big Easy', as he is affectionately known, will not play on American soil until the Nissan Open in California in mid-February, the start of his serious build-up to the April US Masters, the first major of the year.

While Woods and company are conspicuous by their absence this week, Australia's Stuart Appleby will have his sights set on joining Gene Littler in the record books with a third successive victory.

Appleby, who held off a furious late charge by Singh to triumph at Kapalua in 2004 by a shot, became the event's first back-to-back winner in 22 years last January with a closing round of six-under-par 67.

"I think every player comes here and thinks: 'Wow, this is fantastic'," the 34-year-old Australian said after his 2005 triumph.

"But I've always had that mentality that it's one shot at a time. That's an attitude that I did have last year, I know that.

I don't win tournaments unless I have that mentality."

American Littler won the tournament at Desert Inn Country Club in Las Vegas from 1955 to 1957 when the event was known as the Tournament of Champions.

The 28-strong field for the tournament which starts on Thursday will face a revamped par-73 Plantation Course.

All the greens have been replaced since last year, with renovated contours on the putting surfaces at the fourth, eighth and 15th. New bunkers have been installed on the 15th and 16th. *Reuters*

PHILIPPOUSSIS: Back on track

Philippoussis blazes own comeback trail

ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA—AUSTRALIAN Mark Philippoussis won his opening round at the Adelaide International Tuesday, adding later that his best tennis was still to come.

Philippoussis, who has been plagued by injury and bad form and was ranked 172nd in the world going into the match, beat American world No. 75 Vince Spadea 6-4, 3-6, 6-4.

Philippoussis, a former Wimbledon and US Open finalist, has been in a slump since early 2004 and was granted a wildcard entry to the tournament.

"It's good to get out on court and get that monkey that turned into a gorilla off my shoulders," he said after the win.

"I've been working hard in Miami for the past two-and-a-half months to build up to this summer.

"I know I still have my best tennis yet to play." Philippoussis will now face either Slovakia's Dominik Hrbaty or Australian qualifier Rameez Junaid, who were to meet later Tuesday. *AFP*

Is it the Indian or the arrow?

Paeng, Bong talk on soaring bowling scores

NEPOMUCENO: Urethane the culprit

By Jun Engracia

IF NOBODY HAS DOMINATED THE bowling scene since the reign of bowling king and queen Paeng Nepomuceno and Bong Coo, blame it on equipment and technology.

Nepomuceno and Coo, who have dominated the sport since the '70s, say advances in ball and lane technology have sent scores soaring, preventing the best bowlers from rising above the mediocre ones.

Proof of this is the recent 23rd Southeast Asian Games at the Pearl Bowling Center in Parañaque City, where three players scored perfect games and the top all-events qualifiers averaged close to 230.

Indonesia's Ryan Lalisang, the men's singles champion, averaged 228 in topping the 21-game all-events total, which served as the elimination for the 16-man masters competition. And Maria Cecilia Yap, who topped the women's singles for the first of the Philippines' four gold medals, did even better. She scored a 300 en route to an average of 229.

A perfect game, which consists of 12 consecutive strikes, has become so common in competition here and abroad (a local youngster recently bowled consecutive 300s) that they're now talking of a perfect three-game series of 900 (36 consecutive strikes) as the new benchmark for perfection in the game.

Both enshrined in the International Bowling Hall of Fame, Nepomuceno and Coo, without question, are the greatest Filipino bowlers ever. Nepomuceno won the World Cup four times in three different decades while Coo won both the World Cup and the world FIQ championship, the Olympiad of bowling.

They have seen better days as bowlers and they have, ironically, gone into business selling the high-tech equipment that they now lament have made great bowlers out of mediocre ones. Nepomuceno manages the 16 high-end bowling centers that bears his name while Coo is the local distributor of the Brunswick bowling balls and lanes.

In the days when Nepomuceno and Coo lorded it over the local and international scene, they were averaging closer to 200 and were winning big events.

The big difference, according to Nepomuceno, is technology on the balls and the lanes. Where before the top bowlers used rubber and plastic balls, they became obsolete with the advent of urethane balls.

"Now, they're using urethane only as spare balls," said Nepomuceno, who watched the SEA Games competition for seven straight days.

Coo laments that technology has blurred the distinction between the great bowlers and the ordinary ones, and they all bowl on synthetic lanes because wooden boards are now obsolete.

"The balls have taken the skill out of the game," Coo said. "Even average players can score well. These days, you no longer have to hit a target. You only have to release the ball on an area in the lane and the ball will take care of the rest."

"Now you don't have to have great skills to score well. You only have to have the right equipment," said Coo, also at the sidelines of the SEA Games.

Coo proposes to limit the number of balls that players can use in a tournament so players with great skills can rise above the rest of the pack. International rules, including those used in the SEA Games, require the bowlers to register six balls after the official practice sessions and they can use all six in competition.

But Manuel Sengson, assistant coach of the Philippine team and tournament manager of the SEA Games, disagreed with the notion that technology has taken the skill out of the game.

Better equipment may help a little, he said, but that's not all that it takes to make a good bowler, he said.

"In the end, it's still the Indian, not the arrow," Sengson said, mouthing an oft-quoted argument in the debate of skill versus technology in sports.

COO: Even average players can score well

Fernandez next Patafa chief, says Go

FERNANDEZ

PICHAY

CONTROVERSIAL PHILIPPINE Amateur Track and Field Association president Go Teng Kok does not plan to keep his post forever.

In fact, he already has a successor in mind.

Go yesterday told the INQUIRER that Bureau of Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez, concurrently the Patafa chair, "is the best man" for the job and will occupy the post "in due time."

"I will groom him (Fernandez) to take over," Go said over the phone. "He seems to be the best man for the job and he has a heart for the athlete."

The Patafa contributed nine gold medals to the runaway overall victory of the Philippines in the Southeast Asian Games last month. But, despite the latest success, Go feels that a turnover in talent and leadership is also necessary.

Meanwhile, Go, who gave up the presidency of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines, said he will endorse a successor after the election of the members of the board two weeks from now.

"The next president should have a genuine concern for the sport," Go said. "I don't want to make any endorsements at this time. I promise to do so after the election of directors."

Chess was in a shambles in the last SEAG after the country failed to win a single gold despite a powerhouse lineup. Vietnam swept all eight gold medals at stake.

Surigao Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay is reportedly interested in running for the NCFP presidency and has made a grand entrance into the scene by bankrolling a recent P500,000 tournament and funding the trip of a 15-man team to Singapore last week. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

WBL CHAMPS AGAIN
Members and officials of the Miriam College elementary squad show their trophy and medals after putting away the championship anew in the Women's Basketball League organized by Nic Jorge's Milo-BEST Center and backed by Milo. Miriam College downed Community of Learners, 44-21, in the finals. Poveda Learning Centre finished third followed by Assumption College.

RACING TIPS

TOP CHOICE (Edgar Mendez)

RACE 1—(Pentafecta/Trifecta—Stratosphere 1. Shutler 2. Ichiro 9. Jaw Breaker 4. Bullish Dream 5.

Race 2—(Quartet/Trifecta)—C Tonet 3. Hoy Sobra Na 6. Detective Daryll Paige 7. Twiggy's Dream 4.

Race 3—(Pentafecta/Trifecta)—Clear Stone 3. Perfect Harry 6. Sweet Alyssa 4. Le Mirage 11. Kaligatan 5.

Race 4—(Quartet/Trifecta)—Quick Pick 4. Ocean Dignity 3. Mandalay Bay 5. Royal Bet 6.

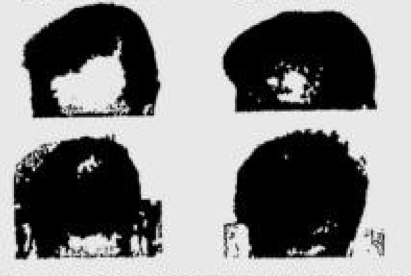
Race 5—(Pentafecta/Trifecta)—Eskapo 7. Quick Play 2. Twelve Or Never 1. Bull Knight 9. Cheers 5.

Race 6—(Quartet/Trifecta)—Movahead 2, Nice Legs/Coromell 3. Bull Rider 5. Sharon's Cookie 4.

Race 7—(Super Six/Trifecta)—Walup Forever 12. Juanito's Dream 2. Uncle 1. Take A Strike 3. Mika's Pride 6. Scarler Beauty 10.

Race 8—(Quartet/Trifecta)—Guided Missile 8. Mary Jane Bomb 5. Bomb Shell 7. Smart Harry 1.

Race 9—(Super Six/Quartet/Trifecta)—Dance Till Dawn 7. Courage Heart 12. Beautiful Task 8. Aim And Fire 3. Besame Mucho 10. Terminator 6.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www.pinedahair.com
Please watch Dr. Pineda in a live interview with Veronica Baluyot on her morning show at 7:30 a.m. on January 5, 2006 on PTV4.

Bill Shaw golf stakes P10M

A PRIZE PACKAGE WORTH ABOUT P10 MILlion plus an Audi A4 2.0. a Mercedez Benz and a Toyota Fortuner are at stake in the 17th annual Bill Shaw Memorial Golf Classic slated Jan. 27-28 at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club.

The Audi, Benz and Fortuner will be the main hole-in-one prizes during the two-day event to be played at the fabled East and West courses of the Mandaluyong club.

The board of directors of Wack Wack and the sports and games committee chaired by director Pablo Soon are putting the finishes to the event held in honor of club founder William J. Shaw.

Soon said all 250 team slots are expected to be filled up by the time registration ends on Jan. 22.

The format will be scrambled on the East course and aggregate on the West course.

Flights can play on Friday morning and Saturday afternoon, or Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. It will be a shotgun start at 6 a.m. and 12 noon on both playing days at both courses.

The entry fee of P7,000 per team will be given back to participants in the form of premium giveaway items. It also entitles teams a practice round in each course on any of the following days, Jan. 10, 11, 12, 13 and 24.

Poker King Challenge resumes

THE 6TH LEG OF THE ONGOING POKER KING Challenge, a series of non-wager poker tournaments, is set Jan. 7 at Casino Filipino at Grand Boulevard Hotel on Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

Poker Club of the Philippines president Ray "Butch" Gamboa said prizes with a cash value of about P60,000 await the leg champion, in addition to trophies and gift items from sponsors.

Gamboa said that the top three leg winners of the sixth and final leg will join other previous leg winners in the Grand Finals slated Jan. 21 at Casino Filipino Tagaytay. The champions of the previous legs include Mon Gelvezon, Perry Calalang, Nicolo Palo, Jessie Dy and Jason Lim.

The Poker King Challenge is sponsored by Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor), Jack Daniels, Miller Genuine Draft Beer, Bicycle Playing Cards/Star Paper, Hyatt Hotel and Casino, Ralph's Wine, and MyReviewerOnline, the internet-knowledge builder, and conducted by the PCP. For inquiries, call the Secretariat at 817-9092 or visit www.PokerClubofthe Philippines.com.

SPORTSWATCH

Aguillar tops 2nd RVA 9-ball tourney

RICHARD "GOLDEN BOY" AGUILLAR DEFEATED ROMEO "OPAO" Timcang, 9-7, in their championship showdown to rule the 2nd RVA 9-Ball Billiards Tournament at the JT Dizon Billiard Hall on Gen. Malvar Street, Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City, recently. Aguillar pocketed the top purse P10,000 in the tournament organized by Ramon "Maestro Monching" Mistica and supported by the billiards venue, Capital Pawnshop, Lheamer Jewelry Shop, Joe Repair Shop & Jewelry, Jazz Cues and Joey's Fastfood. Aguillar downed Jesus Dacoro (7-6), Israel "Amay" Rota (7-6), Tony Bautista (7-6), Henry Marasigan (7-5) and Danny "Joy" Trazona (7-4), to set up the clash with Timcang, who took home the runner-up prize of P5,000. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

Checkmate classes listing opens

REGISTRATION FOR THE FIRST SERIES OF MILO CHECKMATE SATURday-and-Sunday-only chess classes for the year has started at the MCC office at the fourth floor of J&F Divino Building, Aurora Boulevard (near LRT 2 Anonas Station) in Quezon City. The clinics will start on Jan. 14 at the Badminton gymnasium, Rizal Memorial Sports Complex in Vito Cruz, Manila (9 a.m.-12 noon) and at J&F Divino Building (9 a.m.-1 p.m. and from 2 p.m.-6 p.m. Pre-clinic lessons will be conducted for those who will enroll this Saturday. Open to players five to 18 years old, the courses offered are preparatory level, beginners, intermediate and advance. The teaching staff, headed by WNM Mila Emperado, are composed of National Masters Leo Carlos, Ronald Llavanes and Randy Segarra. For inquiries, call the Metropolitan Chess Club at 826-8560, 0916-8521069 or 0922-5397392. Meanwhile, the MCC 2000-below Dalawahan event starts on Jan. 14-15.

On-Line Care chess finals on Jan. 7-8

THE GRAND FINALS OF THE ON-LINE CARE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE Chess Championship finally comes off the wraps on Jan. 7-8 at the Pearl Plaza Mall on Quirino Avenue in Tambo, Parañaque City. The top 12 players from each of the two categories in the semifinals will see action in the two-day competition organized by the Chessmates Executive Chess Circle. Comprising the top 12 in Group A are Fide Master Rico Salimbagat, Ed Sumergido, National master Randy Segarra, NM Dante Zuñiga, NM Robert Arellano, Clement Valledeor, Noel Garcia, Arnel Aton, Dr. Jenny Mayor, Willie Abalos, NM Efren Bagamasbad and Dennis San Juan. The qualifiers from Group B are Adler Enriquez, Ed Tunguia, Leoncio Maulion, Gary Baltar, Xavier Busig, Verth Alora, Jesurie Calabia, Rolando Gangozo, Francis Geriane, Carlo de Leon, Lourecel Hernandez and Orlando Pascual. The round-robin tournament will begin at 1 p.m. on Saturday. Five rounds will be played on the first day and six on Sunday.

Three special derbies set at Roligon

THREE SPECIAL COCKFESTS ARE SLATED AT ROLIGON MEGA COCKPIT for the month of January. Kicking off this Saturday is the Cash Premyo 3-Cock Derby with P250,000 at stake. Entry fee is P4,400 in the event hosted by Roligon employees. The Kayang-Kaya 4-Cock Derby follows on Jan. 14 with a guaranteed cash pot of P400,000 awaiting the winners. Entry fee is P6,600. Roligon's 16th Anniversary 6-Cock Derby unfolds on Jan. 31 and will continue on Feb. 2, 4, 7 and 9 with P4 million in cash prizes and brand Toyota Innova for the fastest win champion at stake. Entry fee is P11,000. For reservation of cockhouses, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 852-9812.

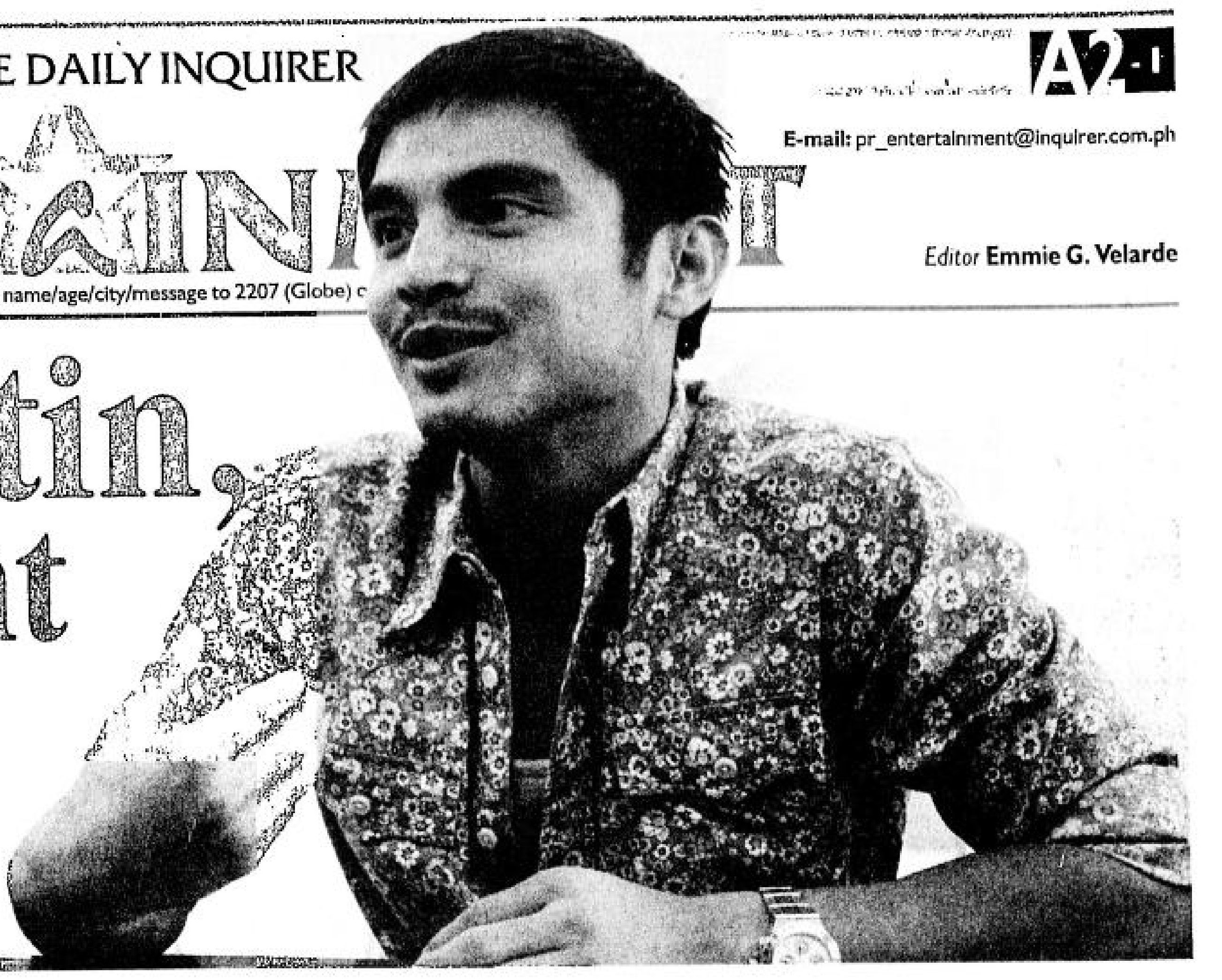
Briones wins P1.5M, Innova in 6-cocker

TABLOID EXECUTIVE REY BRIONES WAS THE SURPRISE DOUBLE CHAMPION in Makati Coliseum's "Pamaskong Salpukan" 6-cock derby last week, a feat worth P1.5 million and a brand new Toyota Innova. Briones' Spartan's Fire and Spartan's Blood both tallied 5.5 points to best a field of 199 entries. It was an unexpected win for Briones' longshot bets, and a heart-breaking setback for four cockers who all lost their championship fights: Boy de Roca (Jojit II), Emil Chua (Concrete Breaker), Michael Monillas (Kristine) and promoter Lito Orillaza (Pilak). Following the derby's impressive turnout, the WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp. will hold another big cockfest in April with two brand new cars at stake. Meanwhile, lined up at Makati Coliseum on Monday is the Pinoy Cockers Association of the Philippines (PCAP) 5-cock derby. More than 65 fights are on tap in the derby. For inquiries, call 896-3545 or 895-6475.

70 fights at San Juan Coliseum today

BIGTIME COCKFIGHTING RESUMES AT THE SAN JUAN COLISEUM TOday as the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) holds a 5-cock derby starting at 5 p.m. with more than 70 fights on tap and Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as sponsor. Seeing action are Gerry Ramos, Rep. Gerry "Boy" Espina, Tony Lasala, Patrick Antonio, Boy de Roca, Representatives Butch Pichay, Jing Paras and Rudy Albano, Cris Milla, Jun Topacio, Mayor Dennis Pineda, Mayor Dunca, Jingco Brothers, Jet Fernando, Pepito Ngo, Rey Briones, Boy Royo, Bebot Roxas, Dicky Lim, Matt Bitanga, among others. GCAP will hold eight circuit derbies this year to determine the 2006 GCAP Cocker of the Year. Also lined up is the popular Big Event derby. For inquiries, call 722-7366 or 725-5369.

ENTERTAINMENT
E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Emmie G. Velarde
Text us your feedback: inquirer ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) c



Marvin Agustin, sinner and saint

By the INQUIRER Entertainment staff

TO PREPARE FOR HIS ROLE as a psychopath in "Kutob," Marvin Agustin made a list of all the disappointments he had experienced in life and tried to recall all his pain.

"Imagine someone who has been angry since he was a child, someone with many unresolved issues. That's Limuel," Marvin told INQUIRER Entertainment during a recent visit to the INQUIRER office.

The actor said his role in "Kutob" is the most difficult he has done so far, partly because he filmed it while doing ABS-CBN's *telesine* "Maging Akin Muli," where he plays a priest, Christopher Santos.

"The shooting schedules of the two movies overlapped. There was a day when I 'killed' someone in the morning and 'baptized' someone at night," Marvin said. "I asked my directors for a few hours of rest in between."

Jose Javier Reyes directs "Kutob," an official entry to this year's Metro Manila Film Festival. "Maging Akin Muli," directed by Marilou Diaz-Abaya, was produced by Jesuit Communications and aired on ABS-CBN on Dec. 18.

Marvin said that playing Limuel also meant going back to boxing and swimming to shed some weight. He added that a course on personality development with filmmaker Freddie Santos, which he attended before accepting the role was put to good use.

"It helped a lot in terms of technique. [Direk Freddie] also taught me useful physical exercises and how to use music to motivate me," Marvin pointed out. "I have in my iPod songs just for Limuel and for Christopher Santos ("Maging Akin Muli"). This is so I won't get confused."

For Limuel, Marvin said he listened to rock and alternative music, while for Christopher, to inspirational songs mostly produced by Jesuit Communications.

In this interview, Marvin shares with INQUIRER Entertainment his plans for his acting career, for his four-month-old twin sons Santiago and Sebastian, and for his father, who is still in prison.

Direk Joey said the perfect Christmas gift for him is, you winning an acting award for his movie. Do you stand a chance?

I pray that he gets his Christmas gift. The movie was offered to me at a time when I was ready to take on any role. Before that, for a little while, I had lost my passion for acting. When I enrolled in that class with Direk Freddie, my excitement came back. I had to go back to my first love—acting.

Apart from that class and the music in your iPod, how else did you go about preparing for the two extremely opposite roles?

I read in the INQUIRER that Meryl Streep always looks for someone to imitate—mannerisms, facial expressions... For Limuel, I couldn't think of anyone to copy. *Ang kabaliwan ng tao hindi naman laging pinakikita*. What I did was, I wrote down on a piece of paper all my bad experiences. *Kapag nawawala na ako sa* character, I sit down for a few minutes and read the list.

TAKE FIVE

What to you would be the perfect gift at this point?

Personally and professionally, I can't ask for anything more [right now]. I got "Kutob," "Maging Akin Muli" and the twins. If you really want something and pray for it, it means you're prepared to get it—and it will be given to you.

How are the twins?

Santiago is older and is always quiet. Sebastian is always playful. He smiles at every one.

Would you allow them to join show biz in the future?

When they finish their studies. [School] is something I miss. That's why I always enroll in short courses.

Has fatherhood changed you?

Nagkaroon ng clear direction *ang buhay ko*. I used to spend all my free time with my *barkada*. Now, I spend it with the kids, playing with them, sleeping beside them.

How did you prepare for fatherhood?

I felt scared and depressed. I asked friends for advice. They told me, 'There are no books on fatherhood. It just happens. All you can do is embrace the situation.' [But] I guess after all that my family has been through, *kakayanin ko na*. My father went to prison when I was 16. At an early age, I was [the breadwinner].

Isn't your father getting parole this year? What are your plans for his return?

There is a bigger chance [of that happening] this year. I plan to get a bigger place, so we could all be together. Right now, I live by myself in a condo unit. Before the twins came, he said he wanted to stay in the province to rest. Now, he says he wants to take care of them. I guess he wants to make up for lost time. He's been away for 10 years.

How's Tetet [Dy, mother of the twins]? How did you meet?

She's a good friend from way back. My relationship with her is actually the most beautiful I've had. We have no plans of getting married yet. I'm 26; she's 32. She runs a pre-school.

So is it serious acting from now on?

I'll continue making films that will make my children proud of me. I will also act in and produce a digital film early next year. I'm just waiting for the second draft of the script by Adolf Alix, who will also direct it. The title is, "Donsol."

By the way, I'm also opening a restaurant at the Edsa Shangri-La, a Japanese restaurant called Sumo Sam.

How about a reunion movie with [former screen partner] Jolina Magdangal?

I'm ready anytime.

How do you feel when you watch your old movies with Jolina?

Nakakatawa ang itsura namin noon (laughs). At that time, *feeling ko, poging-pogi ako*. I'd like people to see how we are now.

A REUNION movie with Jolina: "I'm ready anytime."

PHOTOS BY BETOY JOHNSON

CHEER FACTOR

Sir Tom Jones

LONDON—WHAT'S NEW, PUSSYCAT? Sir Tom Jones!

Jones, 65, the big-voiced singer from Wales, was among the new knights of the realm in the New Year list of honors announced on New Year's Eve. He joins a group of pop-rock knights including Sir Paul McCartney, Sir Cliff Richard, Sir Mick Jagger, Sir Elton John and Sir George Martin, The Beatles producer.

"He will be absolutely over the moon," said Jones' cousin Dorothy Woodward of Caerphilly in south Wales.

Thomas Jones Woodward, born in Pontypridd, began his singing career at age 3. His string of hits started with "It's Not Unusual" in 1963. Other hits included "What's New Pussycat" and "Kiss." *AP*

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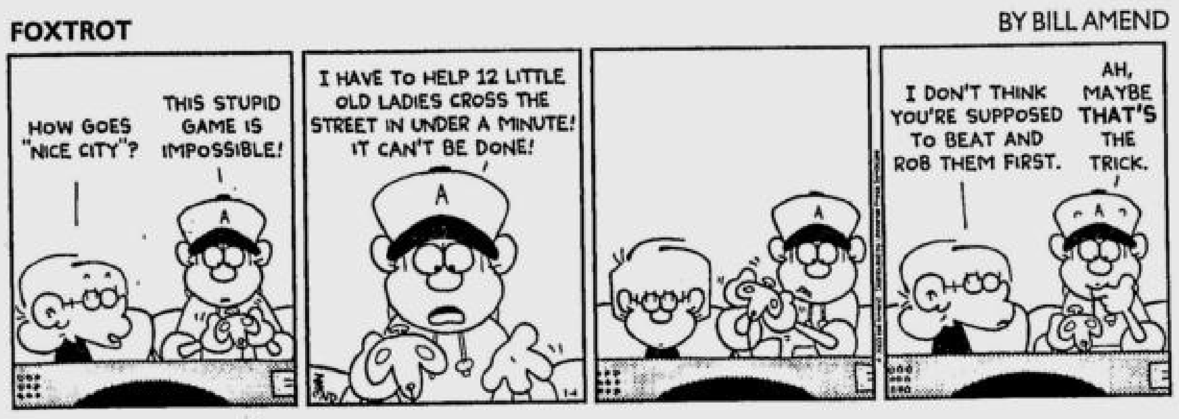
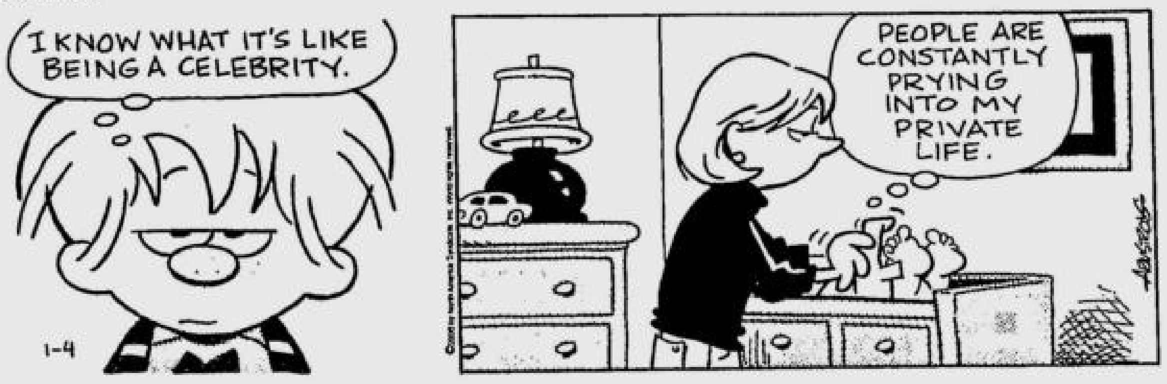
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


HOW GOES "NICE CITY"?
THIS STUPID GAME IS IMPOSSIBLE!
I HAVE TO HELP 12 LITTLE OLD LADIES CROSS THE STREET IN UNDER A MINUTE! IT CAN'T BE DONE!
I DON'T THINK YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BEAT AND ROB THEM FIRST.
AH, MAYBE THAT'S THE TRICK.

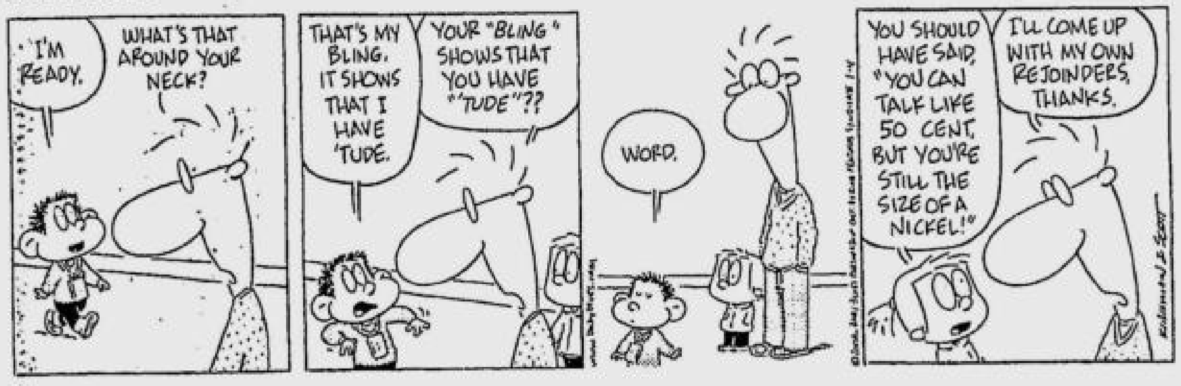
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE BEING A CELEBRITY.
1-4
PEOPLE ARE CONSTANTLY PRYING INTO MY PRIVATE LIFE.

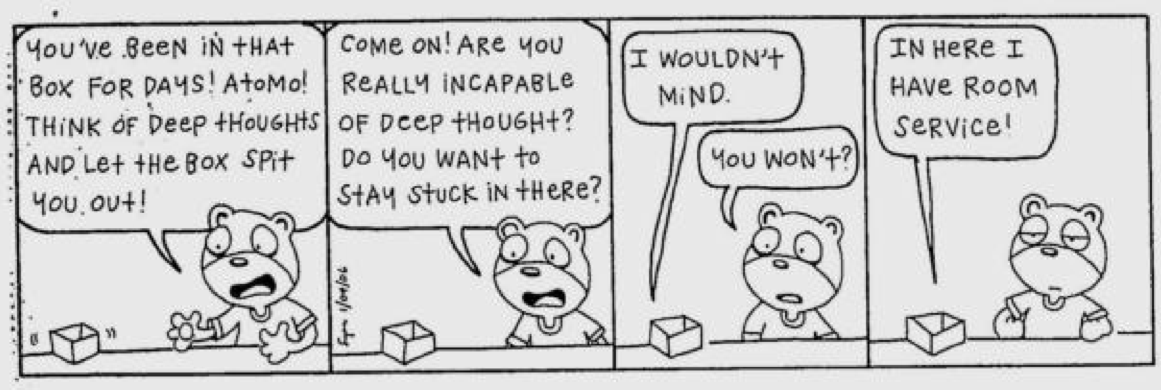
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


I'M READY.
WHAT'S THAT AROUND YOUR NECK?
THAT'S MY BLING. IT SHOWS THAT I HAVE 'TUDE.
YOUR "BLING" SHOWS THAT YOU HAVE "'TUDE"??
WORD.
YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID, "YOU CAN TALK LIKE 50 CENT, BUT YOU'RE STILL THE SIZE OF A NICKEL!"
I'LL COME UP WITH MY OWN REJOINDERS, THANKS.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


You've Been in that Box For Days! Atomo! Think of Deep thoughts And Let the Box Spit You out!
Come on! Are you Really incapable of Deep thought? Do you want to Stay stuck in there?
I WOULDN'T MIND.
YOU WON'T?
IN HERE I HAVE ROOM SERVICE!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a scientific mind and a clever, structured way of looking at things. You're a natural problem-solver. You're organized, and you like schedules. Many of you become remarkable collectors. In the year ahead, you can build or construct something important and valuable. Don't be afraid to work hard. Your rewards will come soon!

Birthdate of: Louis Braille, inventor; Don Shula, football coach; Julia Ormond, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a marvelous day to be noticed by others. It's also an excellent day to talk to bosses, VIPs and parents. People admire you today.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is a wonderful day to make travel plans. It's also an excellent day for publishing, the media and educational matters. New ideas are exciting!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Someone might be very generous to you today. Certainly, others will be supportive at work. This is a good day to ask for more supplies or an increased budget.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): What a charming, social day! You feel upbeat, happy and creative! This is a wonderful day to work with children. (It's also a great day to flirt.) Enjoy yourself.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You can be very productive at work today, primarily because you're happy and in a good mood. This is an excellent day for real estate deals. It's also a good day to work around the home.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This is the perfect time to be on vacation. It's also a great day for the creative arts. Enjoy working with children. Saucy flirtations will please you!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is an extremely good day to shop for home items or buy things for family members, or to make real estate deals. Something to do with your domestic, private world can receive a financial benefit today.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is a great day for marketing, sales, teaching, writing and all forms of communication. Your enthusiasm will sell your ideas. It's also a good day to talk to brothers and sisters.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a marvelous day for business and commerce. It's also a good day to go shopping. Almost all financial transactions favor you now.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Enjoy the company of others today. Schmooze with your pals. Group activities, conferences, meetings and even gossipy conversations over the back fence will be enjoyable.

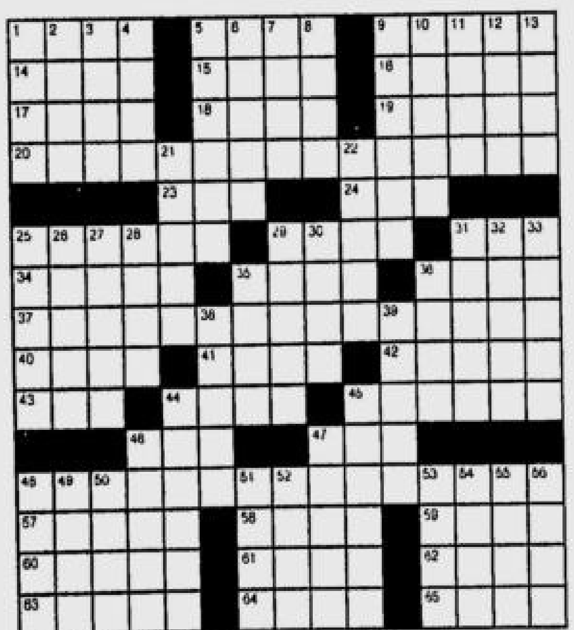
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is a friendly, social day; nevertheless, you will also enjoy solitude. You are quite contented with yourself today. Do whatever you want.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a marvelously popular day for you! Join group activities. Talk to others. People are eager to hear what you have to say now.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Class struggle?
5 Makes a move
9 Bottomless pit
14 Wield the scepter
15 Vamoose!
16 Slalom incline
17 Mineral supplement
18 Spinnaker, e.g.
19 Roman forum attire
20 Soundly trounce
23 Wear and tear
24 Hound sound
25 From one side to the other
29 Fair game
31 Big place in California?
34 Sharp decreases
35 Membership payments
36 "__ Karenina"
37 Regroup after a fray
40 Majors and Trevino
41 Part of CPU
42 Planet's path
43 Urban RRs
44 Thorn site
45 Tops a cake
46 Yield to gravity
47 Told ya!
48 Have done with
57 Geometry calculations
58 Shooter inserts
59 Hoarfrost
60 Minutes taker, perhaps
61 Lemony
62 Came to roost
63 Ballyhoos
64 Bookie's concern
65 Minute spot

DOWN
1 Even off
2 Cash on the Continent
3 Swine's supper
4 Big top
5 Judge the worth of
6 Rub the wrong way
7 Sheer drudgery
8 On one's own
9 Not on target
10 Like March weather
11 Lawrence Peter Berra
12 Petty dispute
13 Go well together
21 Strumpet
22 Too tubby
25 Befuddle
26 Inhumane
27 Blush wines
28 Acts on a preference
29 Feast of Lots
30 What's left
31 Uppity folks
32 Out of condition
33 Swimmers' floats
35 Sand ridge
36 Bushy 'do
38 Expenditure
39 Actress Sophia
44 Authorizations
45 Thanksgiving celebrations
46 Brandon de Wilde's cinematic cry
47 Archeology artifact
48 Bathe
49 Pretentiously creative
50 Leak out slowly
51 As far as
52 Take in text
53 Small quaff
54 Missile garage?
55 Fail to mention
56 Gala event



1/4/06

By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MD

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

E	N	D		A	R	T	D	E	C	O		F	L	U
R	O	O		R	E	B	O	A	R	D		A	E	S
B	R	O	A	D	C	A	U	S	E	D	R	I	V	E
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		T	E	N		R	E	D	D	I	S	H		
C	R	A	W		P	E	R		S	W	E	A	T	S
R	E	X		F	E	A	S	T		I	S	L	E	T
O	B	I		R	A	M		H	A	L		L	A	O
C	A	P	R	I		S	T	A	L	L		E	S	P
I	S	A	I	A	H		H	I	P		A	X	E	S
		S	C	R	A	P	E	S		C	A	P		
M	I	S	C		R	O	B		T	A	R	R	E	D
S	T	A	I	R	M	I	L	K	Y	S	P	E	E	D
G	I	G		C	O	L	O	G	N	E		S	R	A
T	S	E		S	N	U	B	B	E	D		S	O	Y

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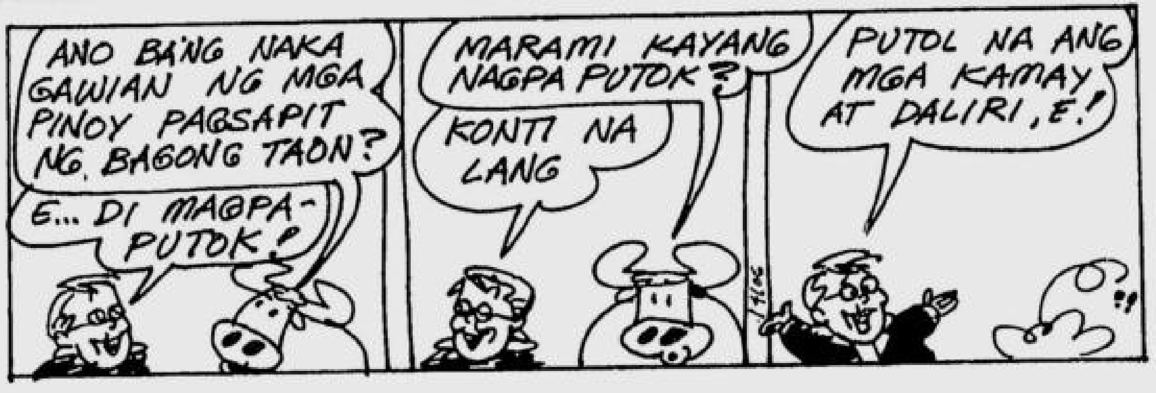
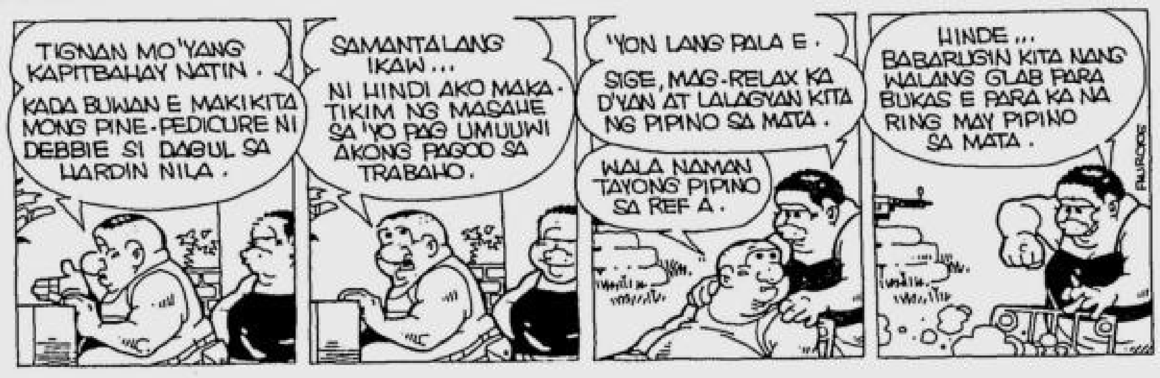
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ANO BA'NG NAKA GAWIAN NG MGA PINOY PAGSAPIT NG BAGONG TAON?
E... DI MAGPA-PUTOK!
MARAMI KAYANG NAGPA PUTOK?
KONTI NA LANG
PUTOL NA ANG MGA KAMAY AT DALIRI, E!

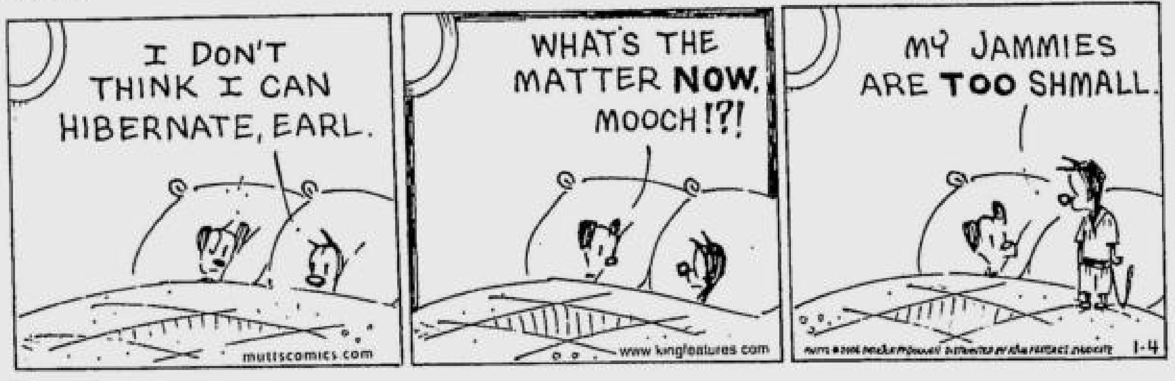
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


TIGNAN MO'YANG KAPITBAHAY NATIN.
KADA BUWAN E MAKIKITA MONG PINE-PEDICURE NI DEBBIE SI DAGUL SA HARDIN NILA.
SAMANTALANG IKAW...
NI HINDI AKO MAKATIKIM NG MASAHE SA 'YO PAG UMUUWI AKONG PAGOD SA TRABAHO.
'YON LANG PALA E.
SIGE, MAG-RELAX KA D'YAN AT LALAGYAN KITA NG PIPINO SA MATA.
WALA NAMAN TAYONG PIPINO SA REF A.
HINDE... BABARUGIN KITA NANG WALANG GLAB PARA BUKAS E PARA KA NA RING MAY PIPINO SA MATA.

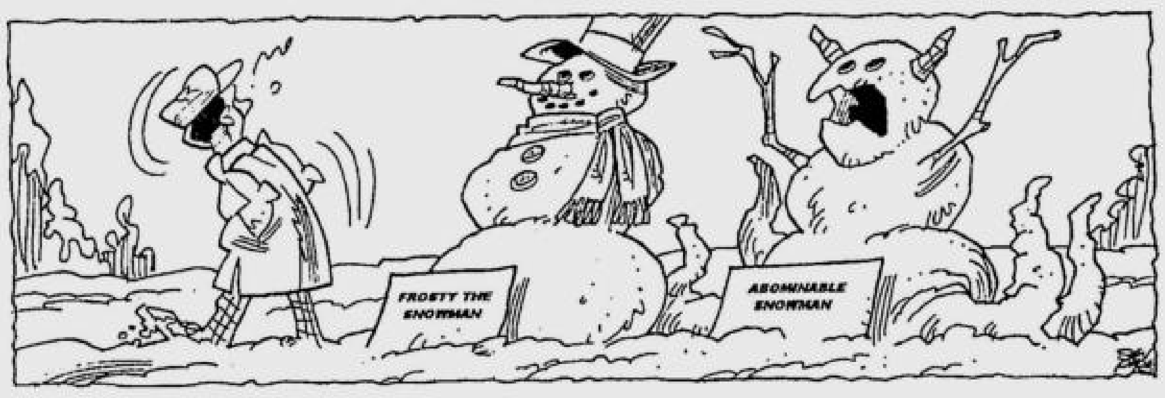
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


I DON'T THINK I CAN HIBERNATE, EARL.
WHAT'S THE MATTER NOW, MOOCH!?!
MY JAMMIES ARE TOO SHMALL.
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com
1-4

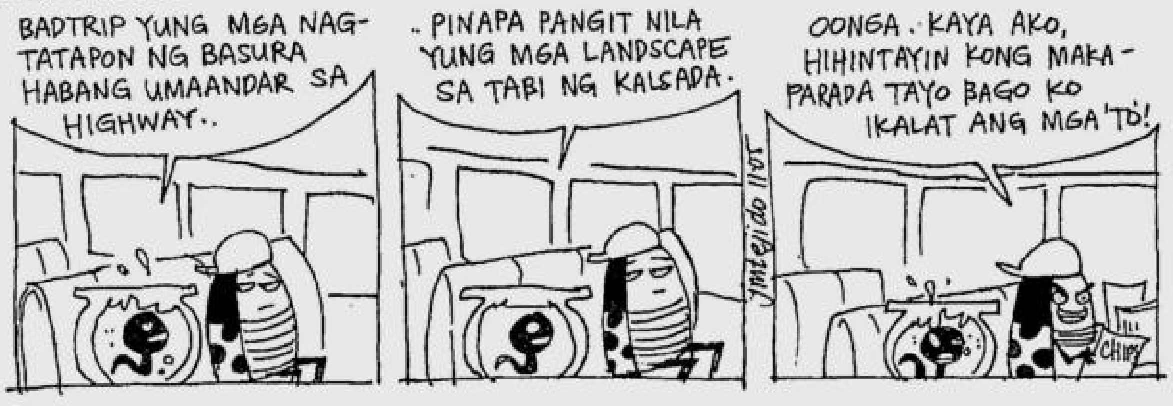
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


FROSTY THE SNOWMAN
ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN

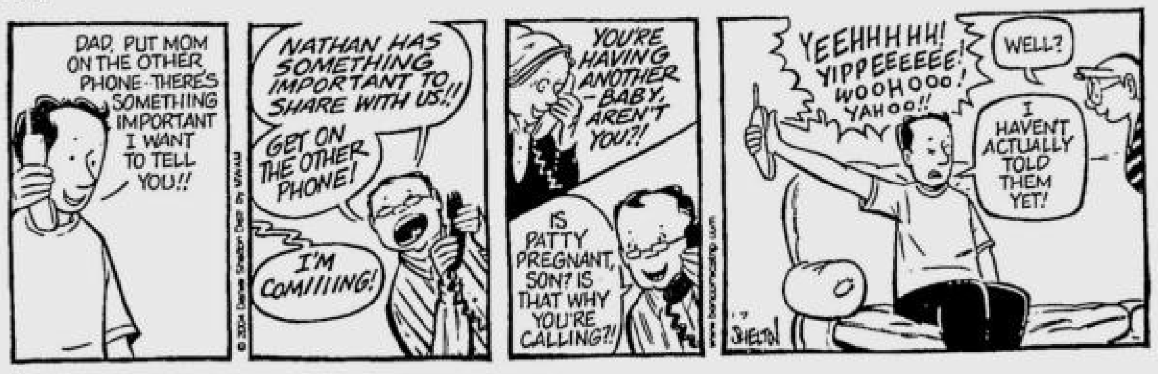
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


BADTRIP YUNG MGA NAG-TATAPON NG BASURA HABANG UMAANDAR SA HIGHWAY..
..PINAPA PANGIT NILA YUNG MGA LANDSCAPE SA TABI NG KALSADA.
OONGA. KAYA AKO, HIHINTAYIN KONG MAKA-PARADA TAYO BAGO KO IKALAT ANG MGA 'TO!
CHIPS

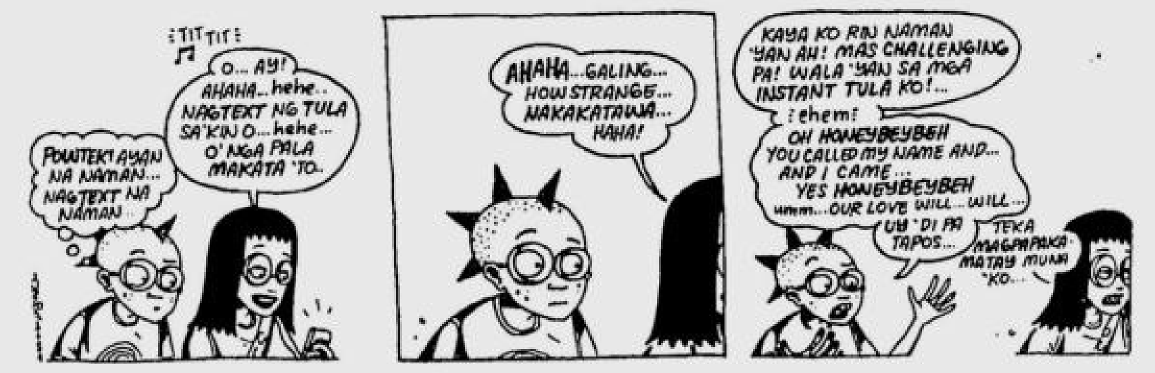
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


DAD, PUT MOM ON THE OTHER PHONE. THERE'S SOMETHING IMPORTANT I WANT TO TELL YOU!!
NATHAN HAS SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SHARE WITH US!!
GET ON THE OTHER PHONE!
I'M COMIIIING!
YOU'RE HAVING ANOTHER BABY, AREN'T YOU?!
IS PATTY PREGNANT, SON? IS THAT WHY YOU'RE CALLING?!
YEEHHHHH! YIPPEEEEEE! WOOHOOO! YAHOO!!
WELL?
I HAVEN'T ACTUALLY TOLD THEM YET!

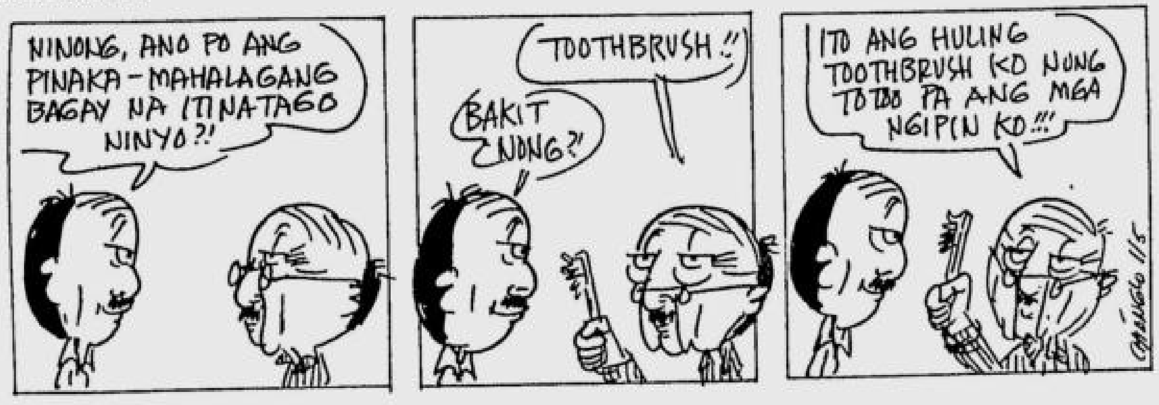
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


TIT TIT
O... AY! AHAHA... hehe.. NAGTEXT NG TULA SA'KIN O... hehe... O' NGA PALA MAKATA 'TO.
POWTEK! AYAN NA NAMAN... NAGTEXT NA NAMAN...
AHAHA... GALING... HOW STRANGE... NAKAKATAWA... HAHA!
KAYA KO RIN NAMAN 'YAN AH! MAS CHALLENGING PA! WALA 'YAN SA MGA INSTANT TULA KO!...
:ehem!
OH HONEYBEYBEH YOU CALLED MY NAME AND... AND I CAME... YES HONEYBEYBEH umm... OUR LOVE WILL... WILL...
UY 'DI PA TAPOS...
TEKA MAGPAPAKAMATAY MUNA KO...

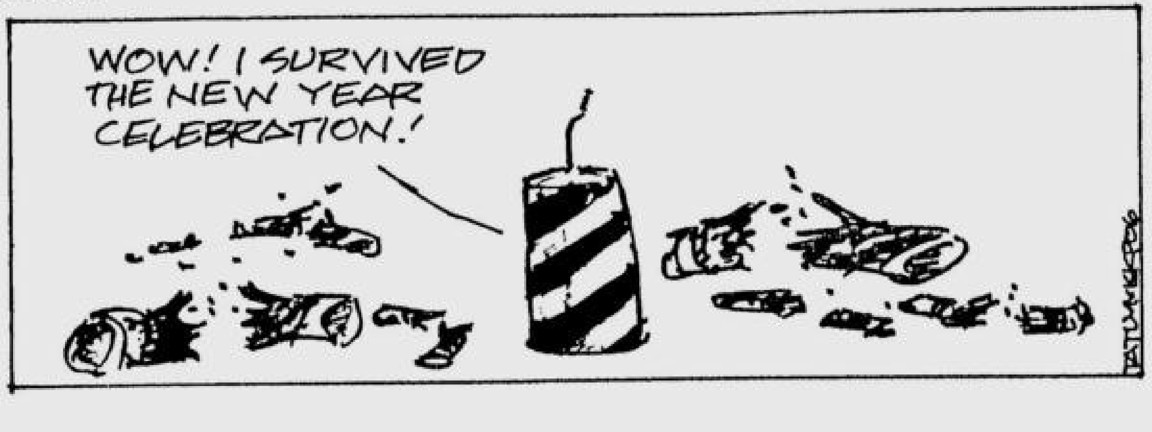
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


NINONG, ANO PO ANG PINAKA-MAHALAGANG BAGAY NA ITINATAGO NINYO?!
BAKIT NONG?!
TOOTHBRUSH!!
ITO ANG HULING TOOTHBRUSH KO NUNG TOTOO PA ANG MGA NGIPIN KO!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


WOW! I SURVIVED THE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION!

Nasty view of 'human' nature

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

A COUPLE OF TV SEASONS AGO, A LOCAL "reality" show shocked viewers by featuring combative relatives, lovers or neighbors who screamed invectives at each other and nearly came to blows.

We pointed out at the time that the "honest" and "reality-based" show was a take-off on similarly cheap and in-your-face programs on US TV, like "The Jerry Springer show." Those shows were popular with C-D viewers because they showed people at their worst, thus eliciting the basest reactions from dimwit viewers.

Thank goodness, the local spin-off finally faded away, after being severely criticized by viewers.

Well, the local show's "inspiration," "The Jerry Springer Show," is showing on cable TV, on the new second avenue channel (on SkyCable, it's Channel 53). So, interested TV buffs can check it out to get a better handle on the "appeal" of "confrontational" television.

The alibi is, such shows are instructive because they depict "life" as it really is, so the problem brought up—and their solutions—can teach viewers how to resolve similar conflicts in their own lives.

Truth is, however, most nasty conflicts on Springer's show never get resolved, because the program is more interested in nastiness for nastiness' sake.

Thus, it features the most far-out and exotic confrontations, like a pair of male twins sharing the same woman, or two hookers fighting tooth and nail over their oily pimp.

Most of the time, the emotional and physical confrontations get to be so rough that "bouncers" have to step in to prevent the combatants from inflicting serious injury on each other.

As they lunge at each other, the members of the show's studio audience behave like they were at the Coliseum in Rome during Nero's time, urging gladiators to kill one another.

What "lessons" can be learned from such an obviously exploitative and demeaning display of "human nature"? No, this is more like man's animal nature come to the fore, and the real point isn't psychological insight, but invective, hatred and controversy.

True, quite a lot of the verbal insults on Springer's program are bleeped, so viewers' sensibilities are spared. But much of the visual violence isn't edited out, so the show's nasty view of "human" nature still communicates, and does its worst in assaulting viewers' sensibilities.

'Blue Moon'

IN the Metro filmfest entry, "Blue Moon," 83-year-old Manuel Pineda (Eddie Garcia) learns that he has only six months to live, so he embarks on a search for his truest love, who has been missing for decades.

His search takes him all over the country. In the process, he bonds with his son Rod (**Christopher de Leon**) and grandson Kyle (**Dennis Trillo**), and old wounds are healed.

Other major roles are played by **Boots Anson-Roa, Jennylyn Mercado, Pauleen Luna** and **Mark Herras.**

'InfoMedico'

Hosted by noted cardiologist Dr. Esperanza **Cabral**, "InfoMedico" is aired M-F, 12-12:30 p.m. over RPN 9's "Arangkada Balita." Now on its second season, the informative program emphasizes treatment prevention and basic information about a wide range of illnesses.

Viewers appreciate "InfoMedico" because it brings medical and technical terms down to laymen's level. Digital images and colorful graphics make each topic even more understandable and involving.

On its second season, the show will tackle timely medical issues, like the rising threat of diabetes, hypertension and stroke and the looming bird flu epidemic.

'Rumor Has It'

JENNIFER Aniston and Kevin Costner co-star in "Rumor Has It." She's afraid of getting married—until her grandmother (**Shirley MacLaine**) reveals that, 30 years ago, her mother ran off with a mysterious young man before her wedding. Aniston then goes to San Francisco to look up her mother's classmate (Costner), who is now an internet billionaire—and learns valuable life lessons from him.

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CINEMA 4 BLUE MOON GP 11:30, 1:45, 3:55, 6:05, 8:15, 10:25
CINEMA 5 AKO LEGAL WIFE PG13 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50

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Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

MULAWIN GP 12:20,2:50,5:30, 7:50,10:15	BLUE MOON GP 1:05,3:20,5:35,7:50, 10:05	AKO LEGAL WIFE: MANO PO 4 PG13 12:30,2:50,5:10, 7:30,10:00
ENTENG KABISOTE: THE LEGEND CONTINUES GP 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10	MORNING GIRLS R13 1:15,3:30,5:45,8:00, 10:15	EXODUS: TALES FROM THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM GP 12:40,3:00,5:20, 7:40,10:00

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① ENTENG KABISOTE 2 MTRCB GP 12 20, 2 45, 5 10, 7:35, 10:00
③ AKO LEGAL WIFE MTRCB PG-13 12 20, 2 45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00
② MULAWIN THE MOVIE MTRCB GP 12 00, 2 30, 5 00, 7:30, 10:00
④ BLUE MOON MTRCB GP 12 05, 2 30, 4:55, 7:20, 9:45
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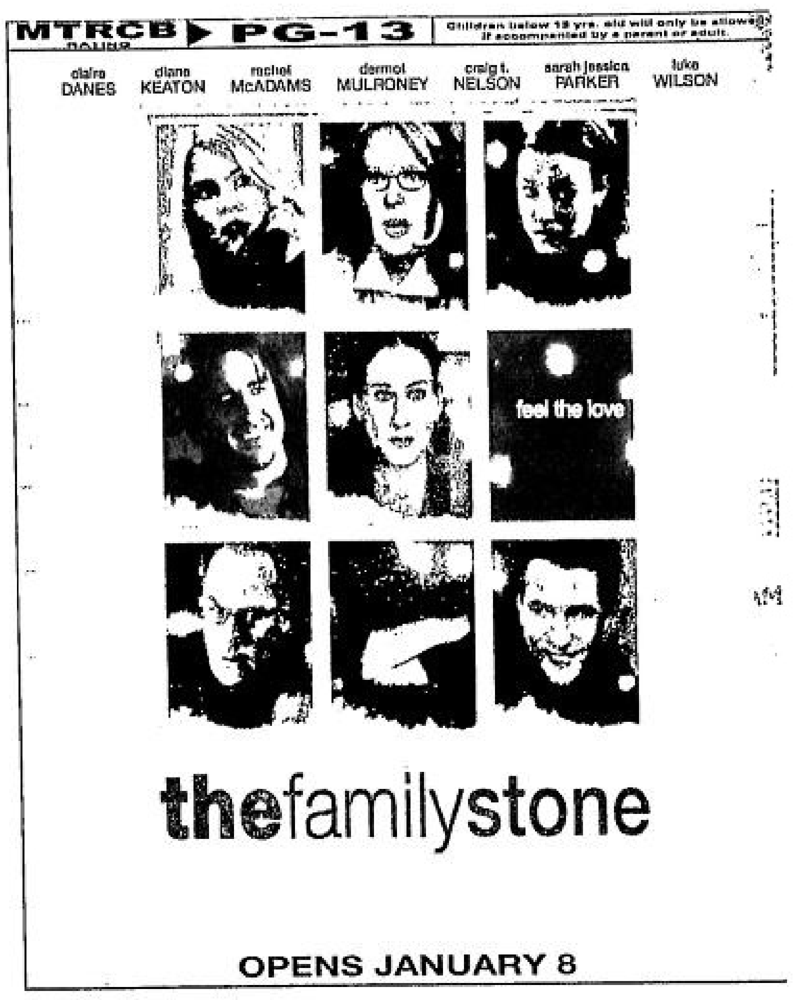

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.
claire DANES diane KEATON rachel McADAMS dermot MULRONEY craig t. NELSON sarah jessica PARKER luke WILSON
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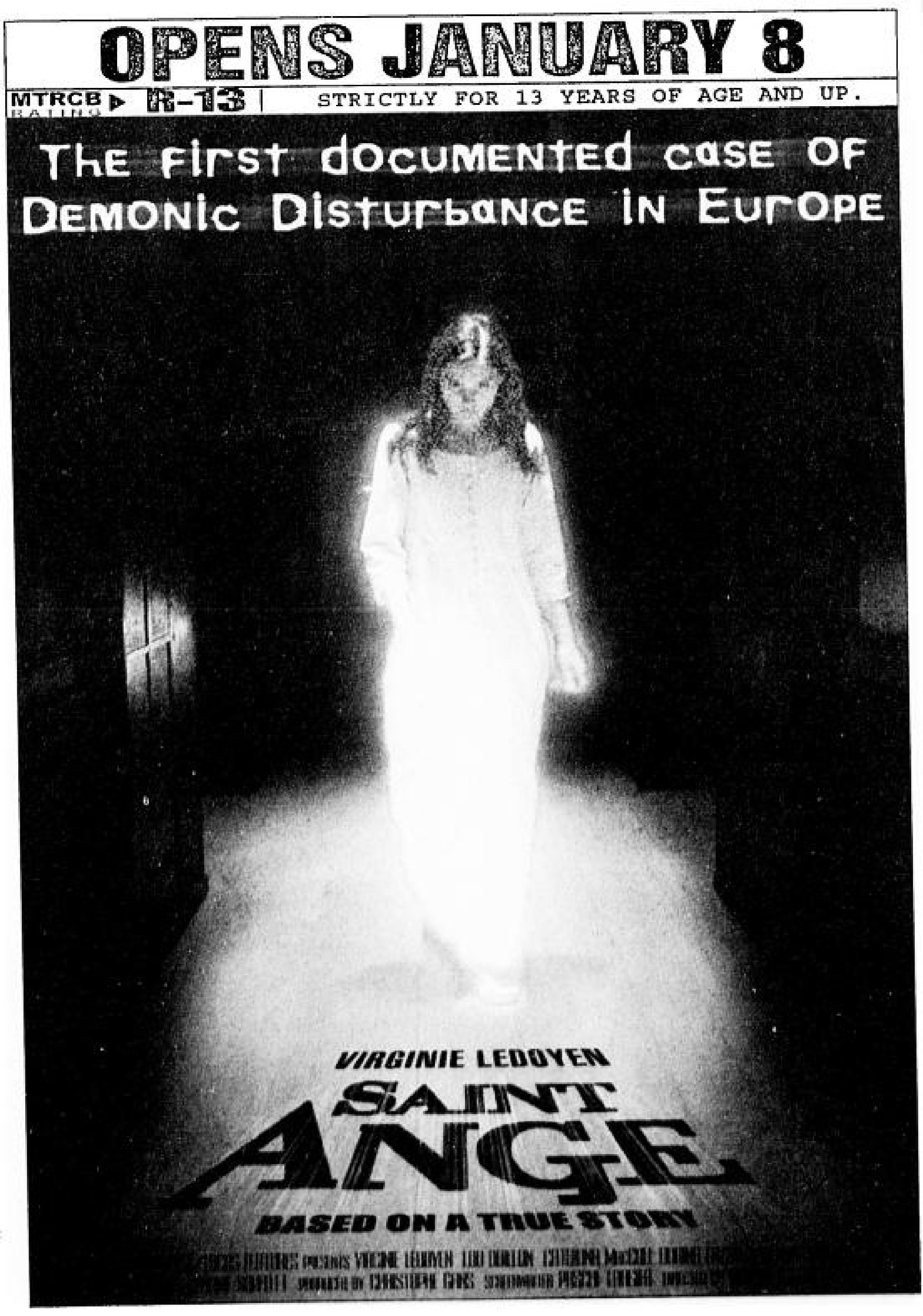

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1 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE 2 GP
2 (DOLBY) MULAWIN THE MOVIE GP
3 (DOLBY) AKO LEGAL WIFE P13
4 (DOLBY) BLUEMOON GP
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) CLOSED

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DDS) EXODUS
2 (SDDS) MULAWIN
3 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE -2
4 GOLD (DTS) MOURNING GIRL
5 GOLD (DOLBY) LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
6 GOLD (SDDS) KUTOB
7 GOLD (DOLBY) BLUE MOON
8 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
9 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
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tel 687.6963 or 72
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2 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 (DOLBY) EXODUS
4 (DOLBY) KUTOB

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Cinema 2000 Waltermart
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1 MULAWIN
2 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) EXODUS
4 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Binan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2 (DOLBY) EXODUS
3 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE
4 MULAWIN

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 MULAWIN
3 (DOLBY) EXODUS

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY) EXODUS
4 (DTS) MULAWIN

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 EXODUS
2 MULAWIN
3 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)
1 EXODUS
2 ENTENG KABISOTE

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 MULAWIN
2 EXODUS
3 BLUE MOON
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Blue Wave MARQUINTON
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3 (DOLBY) BLUE MOON
4 (DOLBY) EXODUS

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) EXODUS
2 MOURNING GIRL
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 BLUE MOON
5 MULAWIN

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www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 EXODUS
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
5 MOURNING GIRLS

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 BLUE MOON

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 MULAWIN
2 EXODUS
3 MOURNING GIRL

METROPOLIS star
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(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433994
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3 MOURNING GIRL
4 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) MULAWIN
2 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 (DTS ES) ENTENG KABISOTE
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan, Telephone No. (044) 600-3025
1 MULAWIN
2 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3 EXODUS

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 MULAWIN
2 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 (DOLBY) AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE

Cinemagic Pacific Mall
(Lucena City) tel. 6605271
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
4 MULAWIN

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 MULAWIN
2 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 (DOLBY) AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 MULAWIN
2 EXODUS

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2 EXODUST

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) BLUE MOON
2 MULAWIN
3 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
4 (DTS) EXODUST

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) EXODUST
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DTS) MULAWIN
4 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
5 ENTENG KABISOTE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 MULAWIN
4 EXODUST

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 BLUE MOON
2 MOURNING GIRLS

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

ROUNDUP

Best-selling albums race

NEW YORK—MARIAH CAREY HAS INCHED past 50 Cent in the race for the year's best-selling album.

Carey's "The Emancipation of Mimi" sold 290,000 copies in the week ending Dec. 25, according to figures released by Nielsen SoundScan. That brings her total to 4.86 million copies on the year, compared to 4.83 million for 50's "The Massacre," which came out in March.

"Mimi," released in April, received eight Grammy nominations, tying for the most with Kanye West and John Legend.

The top selling album last week, according to SoundScan, was Mary J. Blige's "The Breakthrough," which sold 727,000 copies in its first week. Jamie Foxx's "Unpredictable," also just released, sold 598,000 copies.

MARIAH Carey

Best film

NEW YORK—"Crash," the ensemble drama about the prejudices of intersecting characters, has been named top film of the year by the African-American Film Critics Association.

TERRENCE Howard

Besides "Crash," the AAFCA chose nine others as the top movies: "The Constant Gardener," "Good Night, Good Luck," "Brokeback Mountain," "Syriana," "Walk the Line," "Hustle & Flow," "Capote," "Batman Begins" and "North Country."

Terrence Howard was named Best Actor for "Hustle & Flow." Felicity Huffman was cited as Best Actress for "Transamerica."

"Our organization pays special attention to work by artists of African descent, [but] Ms Huffman is undeniably amazing in this role," AAFCA president Gil Robertson IV said in a statement.

BONO

U2 tensions

LONDON—Rock star Bono said Saturday that his commitment to campaigning against poverty caused tensions within his band, U2.

The musician said that, at one point, he feared he would be thrown out of the band.

"They (the band) are hugely supportive... of the work I do, but... the first job of a rock 'n roll band is not to be dull," Bono told British Broadcasting Corp. radio. "So we have to be very careful about just letting me go too far."

Brando sued

LOS ANGELES—Christian Brando, son of the late actor Marlon Brando, has been sued by his ex-wife and stepdaughter alleging he often abused and threatened to kill them, their lawyer said.

Brando and his ex-wife met in 1990, the same year he pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter for the shooting death of his half sister's boyfriend Dag Drollet. Brando served five years in prison.

The lawsuit alleges that Brando "repeatedly struck Ms Brando with his hands and fists and threatened to kill her in the presence of her daughter." *AP*

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1	BLUE MOON	1	AKO LEGAK WIFE
2	AKO LEGAL WIFE	2	KING KONG
MEGAMALL			
1	EXODUS	3	ENTENG KABISOTE 2

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 EXODUS
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
5 KUTOB
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE
7 MOURNING GIRLS
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
9 BLUE MOON
10 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
11 EXODUS
12 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO

SM CITY STA. MESA
AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 EXODUS
MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
8 MOURNING GIRLS
9 BLUE MOON
10 EXODUS

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 BLUE MOON
3 MULAWIN
4 EXODUS

SM VALENZUELA
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 EXODUS
4 BLUE MOON

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
3 KUTOB
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
5 MOURNING GIRLS
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 EXODUS
8 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
9 BLUE MOON
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
EXODUS

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
EXODUS
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
5 BLUE MOON
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE
7 MOURNING GIRLS
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
9 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
10 KUTOB

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 BLUE MOON
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 EXODUS
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 KUTOB
5 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
6 BLUE MOON
SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
8 EXODUS

SM CITY MANILA
MOURNING GIRLS
EXODUS
3 KUTOB
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
6 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
7 BLUE MOON
AKO LEGAL WIFE
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
10 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
11 EXODUS
12 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO

SM SAN LAZARO
EXODUS
2 BLUE MOON
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
ENTENG KABISOTE 2

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 EXODUS
3 BLUE MOON
4 KING KONG
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY BAGUIO
EXODUS
2 BLUE MOON
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM MOLINO
MULAWIN THE MOvIE
2 EXODUS
3 BLUE MOON
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY BACOOR
LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 EXODUS
6 BLUE MOON
SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
MOURNING GIRLS

SM CITY MARILAO
EXODUS
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 BLUE MOON
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY DASMARINAS
EXODUS
2 KING KONG
BLUE MOON
ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY LUCENA
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 BLUE MOON
EXODUS

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
2 EXODUS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 BLUE MOON

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 KING KONG
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 BLUE MOON
6 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
7 MOURNING GIRLS
8 EXODUS

SM CITY ILOILO
1 EXODUS
2 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
3 MOURNING GIRLS
4 BLUE MOON
5 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
6 KING KONG
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY DAVAO
1 EXODUS
2 KING KONG
3 MOURNING GIRLS
4 BLUE MOON
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 KING KONG
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 EXODUS

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MOVIE LISTING, MTRCB RATING, SCREENING SCHEDULES AND THE LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SM CINEMA

Araneta Center Leisure Guide.

CINEMA SCHEDULES

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ONLY P120 ADMISSION
GLOBE PLATINUM P249 / P299
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX

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EXODUS
12:30 / 2:40 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30
SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
12:30 / 2:40 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30
MULAWIN
2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2:05 / 4:35 / 7:05 / 9:35
KUTOB
12:30 / 2:45 / 5:00 / 7:15 / 9:30

GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA
AKO, LEGAL WIFE
1:30 / 4:00 / 6:30 / 9:00
AKO, LEGAL WIFE
2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
BLUE MOON
12:30 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40
MOURNING GIRLS
12:40 / 2:50 / 5:00 / 7:10 / 9:30

ALI MALL CINEMAS
① ENTENG KABISOTE 2
12:30 / 3:00 / 5:30 / 8:00
② MULAWIN
12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35 / 8:05
③ KUTOB
12:20 R4 / 1:35 / 3:50 / 6:05 / 8:20
④ LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
1:00 / 3:20 / 5:40 / 8:00
⑤ AKO LEGAL WIFE
12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35 / 8:05
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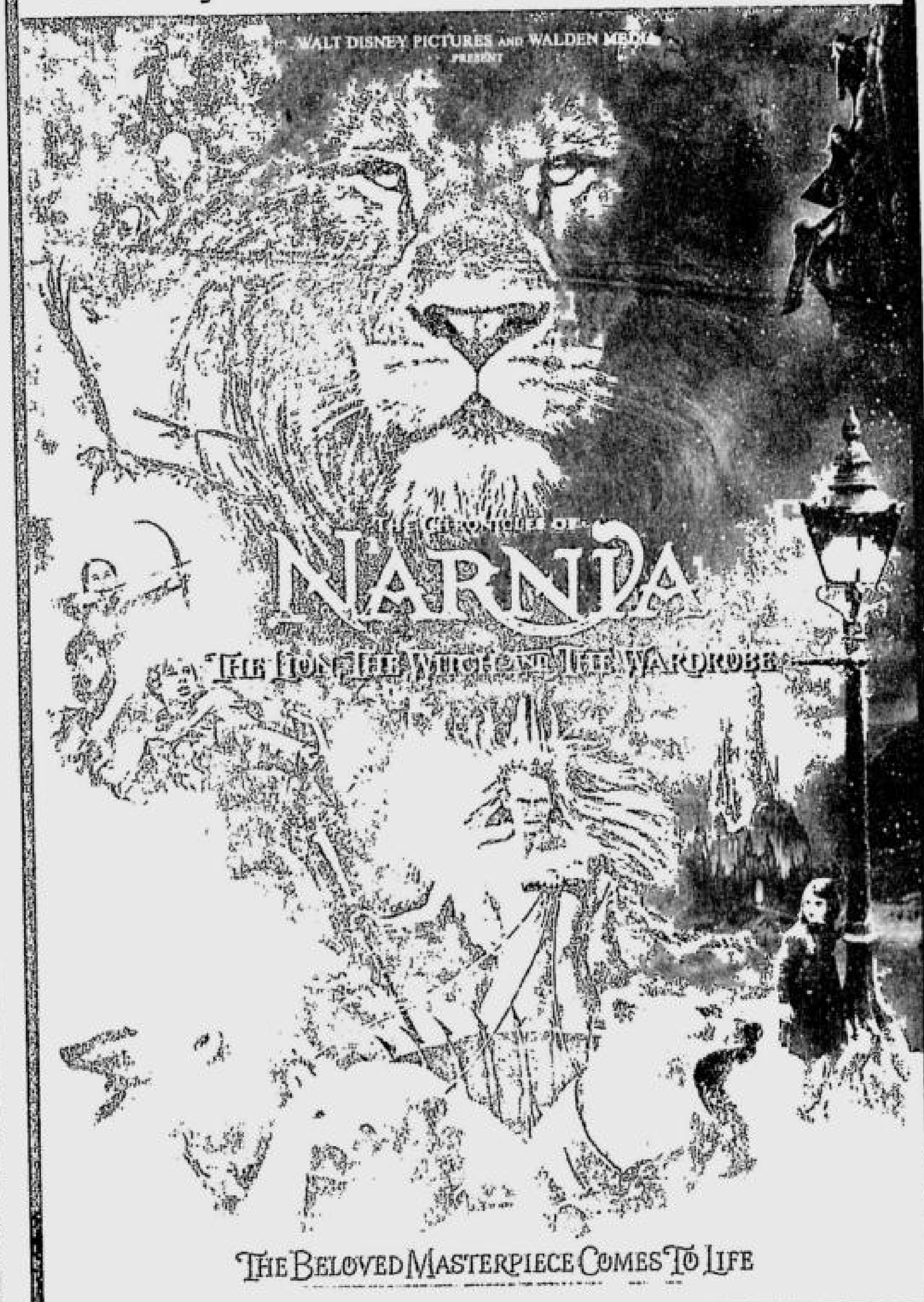
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GALLERIA 632-9116

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE • THX 12:55 3:15 5:35 7:55 10:00	6 MULAWIN the MOVIE 12:20' 2:50 5:20 7:40 10:00
2 EXODUS 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	7 AKO LEGAL WIFE 12:25 2:45 5:05 7:25 9:35
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2 12:15 2:45 5:15 7:45 10:00	8 BLUE MOON 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 KUTOB 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	9 THE MOURNING GIRLS 12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	10 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO 12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE 10:10 12:30 2.50 5:10 7:30 9:50	5 BLUE MOON 10 30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00
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4 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50	7 EXODUS 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 / 682-8199

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20 9:00	5 AKO LEGAL WIFE 10:45 1:20 3:55 6:30 9.05
2 EXODUS 12:20 2:40 5:00 7:20 9:30	6 THE MOURNING GIRLS 10:45 1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20	7 BLUE MOON 12:05 2:15 4:25 6:35 9:00
4 MULAWIN the MOVIE 11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00	8 LAGOT KA SA KUYA MO 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 EXODUS
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 THE MOURNING GIRLS
4 BLUE MOON
5 MULAWIN the MOVIE
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 AKO LEGAL WIFE
8 LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO

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2 EXODUS
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2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
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2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 MULAWIN the MOVIE

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2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 MULAWIN the MOVIE
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G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 TERRORIST HUNTER	5 KUTOB	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	7 EXODUS
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX TERRORIST HUNTER GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 KUTOB GUARANTEED SEATS	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL GUARANTEED SEATS	5 EXODUS GUARANTEED SEATS	
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	3 KUTOB	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	5 EXODUS	
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'Hua Mulan' is all about illusion

... but obviously also about skill, focus and years and years of disciplined practice

REVIEW

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

THE HEBEI ACROBATIC CIRCUS TROUPE OF China could teach Filipinos a thing or two about using tricks purely for entertainment purposes.

In the "Hua Mulan Fantasy Magical Journey" series at the Aliw Theater (Star City, CCP Complex, Dec. 23 to Jan. 2) the acrobats served up a refreshing take on the various skills required of stunts and tricks of illusion.

The title was immaterial to the 90-minute show. The story of Mulan, a Chinese maiden who goes to war disguised as a man, hardly made an impact after a breathtaking jar-juggling act.

Without the Mulan dance sequences, in fact, the acrobats could have happily shocked and awed the audience some more.

It was no longer a question of what is more novel or daring; it all boiled down to the audience liking what it saw.

Sustained

The suspense over whether a juggler could avoid breaking his head every time he catches a heavy jar with his neck was sustained till the end of the act.

The women who gracefully twirled and caught objects with strings elicited loud applause—even after one of the objects fell out of reach.

A gymnast who performed stunts over several chairs piled high received even louder applause.

The climactic acts, the producer explained, were "all about illusion"—mutilating a man with a giant chainsaw; moving the chopped head of a girl to the other end of the stage; fire rods piercing the body of another girl.

At the end of each act, members of the audience gasp and look around as if to ask, "How the heck did that happen?"—before breaking into cheers.

The question that lingers is not why and how children get entranced by magic. Rather, it is why some adults look beyond the entertainment value of tricks and constantly attempt to pull a fast one over one another in real life.

"Hua Mulan" goes on extended run at the Ynares Center in Antipolo on Jan. 6, 7 and 8.

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Beautiful Boxer

Have you ever fought hard for something you really wanted? This is precisely what Parinya Charoenphol, Thailand's famed transgender kickboxer, did to achieve his ultimate goal.

More popularly known in Thai boxing circles as Nong Toom, Charoenphol realized at a tender young age that he was a girl trapped in a boy's body. Born to a poor family, the gentle Nong quite ironically set out to master the most masculine and lethal sport of Muay Thai (Thai boxing) to earn a living. Pretty soon, his swooping kicks, flying elbows and sledgehammer uppercuts won him match after match, fueled with a deepest desire – to become a woman.

The heartfelt, real life story of Nong Toom is featured in the film "Beautiful Boxer". The movie bagged numerous Thai awards, as well as honors in international film festival circuits including: •Grand Prix 2004 Brussels International Film Festival • 2004 Montreal Image+Nation International Film Festival • Best Film 19th Torino Festival Internationale Film Festival • Jury Prize Skeive Filmer Norway International Film Festival • Gehitu Sebastian Award • San Sebastian International Film Festival •

Watch out for the opening of the most-anticipated movie of 2006 –"Beautiful Boxer" – in theaters beginning January 8. Released exclusively by VIVA International Pictures.

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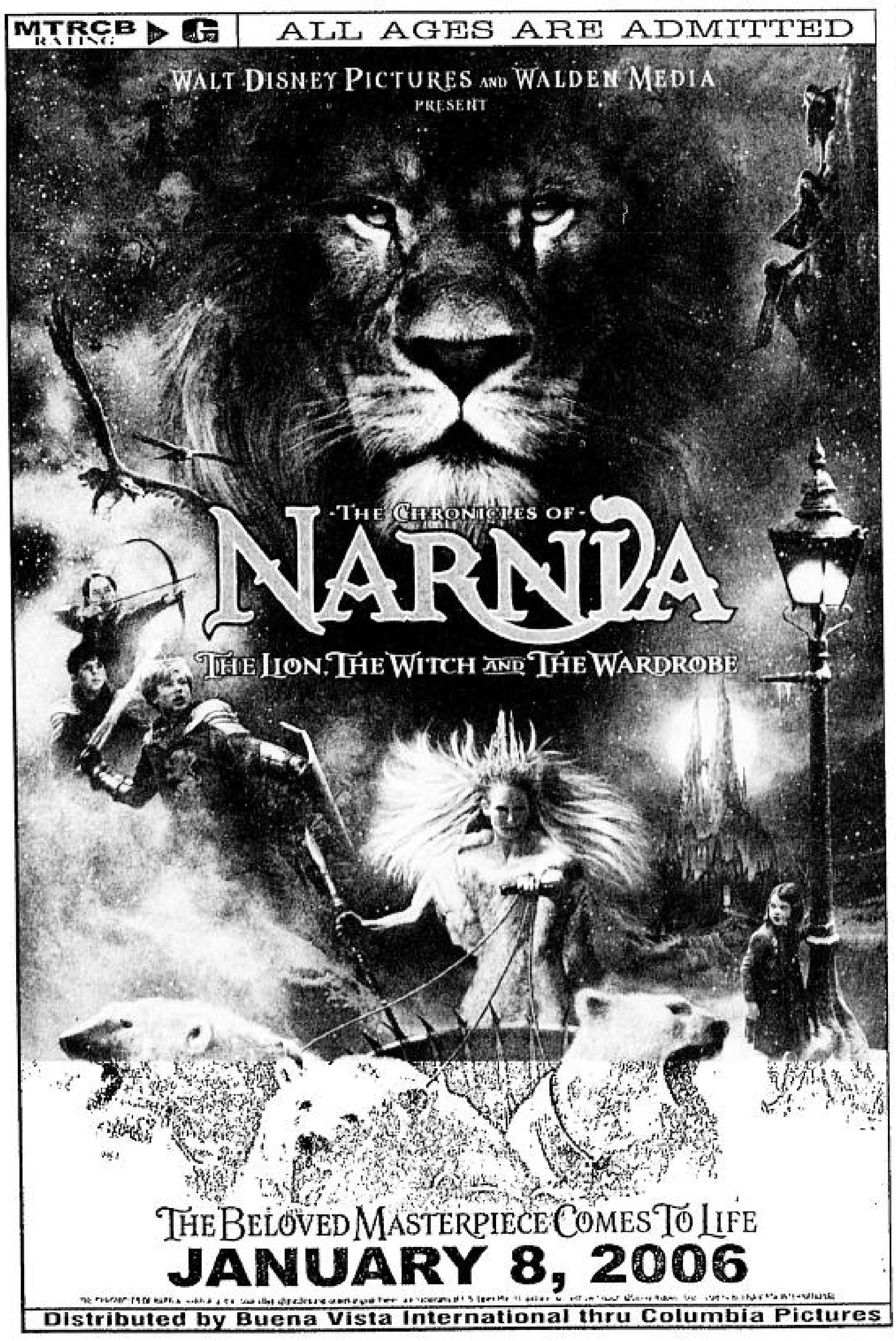
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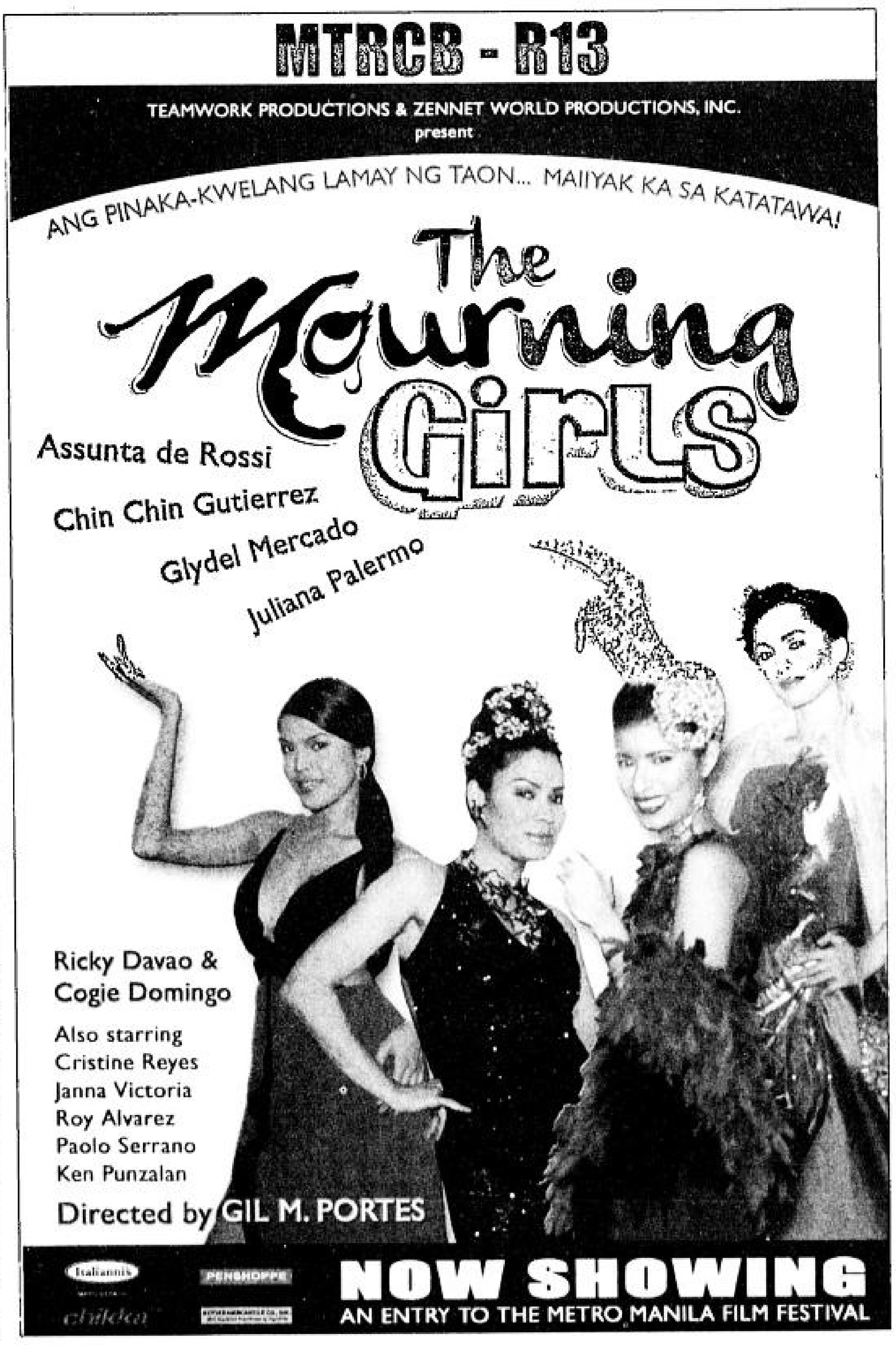
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Peso continues to rally, closes at 52.66 to $1

Market bullish on gov't fiscal position, ratings upgrade

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO RALLIED FURTHER TO 52.57 TO A DOLLAR before closing at a new three-year high of 52.66 yesterday on rosy prospects for the Philippines this new year.

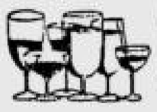
"The market is euphoric. There is no stopping the peso's ascent," said Equitable PCI Bank chief currency dealer Marcelo Ayes.

After breaking past the 53:$1 barrier on Monday, the peso gained another 17.5 centavos from the previous closing of 52.835. Trading volume stood at a heavy $513 million.

Ayes said the Christmas-related inflows from overseas Filipino workers were fizzling out, but market sentiment remained bullish on expectations of a much better government fiscal position this year, which could lead to a potential sovereign credit ratings upgrade.

The market also took position ahead of expected inflows from forthcoming initial public offerings by conglomerate cash cows Universal Robina Corp. of the Gokongwei group, and First Generation Holdings Corp. of the Lopezes.

WHAT'S INSIDE



Castilaloy and 'kuripot' /B3

DA sees weak growth in '05 farm output /B10

7-yr T-bond rate drops to 9%

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF TREASURY SAID market concerns about the government's long-term fiscal prospects have already dissipated, at least based on the banks' response to the issuance of the seven-year treasury bonds yesterday.

The bond rate fell below the 10-percent mark in yesterday's auction, shedding 150 basis points (1.5 percentage points) to 9 percent.

The seven-year bonds fetched 10.5 percent when they were auctioned on Nov. 15.

"The market has now taken a long-term view on the fiscal position of the government by making very aggressive bids for the seven-year bonds," National Treasurer Omar Cruz said in a press briefing after the auction.

Market players swamped the auction, submitting P12.08 billion worth of bids for the long-term government securities. The amount of bids was more than three times higher than the government's debt offering of only P4 billion.

Cruz noted that the yield of 9 percent was even lower than the 9.25 percent expected by the Treasury. The decline in the rate of the seven-year bonds is expected to influence market response to other treasury bill tenors in the coming auctions, he added.

"Government efforts (to improve the fiscal standing) are paying off, and the market is rewarding the government for its fiscal discipline," Cruz said.

7-YR T-BOND/ B3

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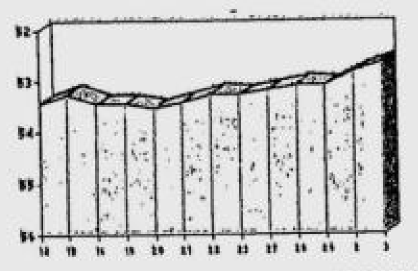


PESO-DOLLAR RATE

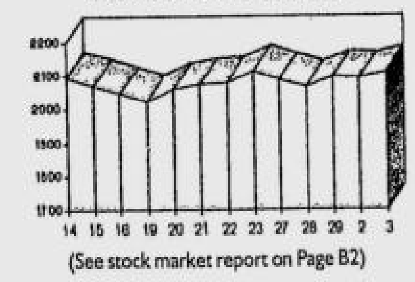
₱ 52.66 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 3, 2006

¥ 117.48 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 30, 2005

GOLD: $516.40-516.90
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 3, 2006

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks rise 0.9% on strong peso, low interest rates

STOCKS ROSE YESTERDAY, aided by the stronger peso and declining domestic interest rates.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index gained 17.79 points, or 0.9 percent, to 2,109.79, rebounding from a 4.04-point loss Monday. The broader All Shares Index climbed 7.72 points to close at 1,278.05 after slipping 2.81 points Monday.

"Some investors are back from their holidays, and their interest is being fueled by the stronger peso and the declining interest rates that are a plus for property companies," said Erwin Balita, analyst at AB Capital Securities. *(See related stories on this page.)*

Gainers outnumbered losers 49 to 18, with 42 issues unchanged. All sectoral indicators ended higher.

Among stocks likely to benefit from lower rates and a stronger peso, Bank of the Philippine Islands rose 2.8 percent to P55.50 and Ayala Land added one percent to P10.

First Philippine Holdings Corp. advanced 4.1 percent to P51 in anticipation of gains expected from the upcoming initial public offering of its power generation unit, First Gen.

Manila Water rose 3.2 percent to P6.40 after it implemented a water rate increase this month and won a one-year extension of its income-tax exemption. *AP*

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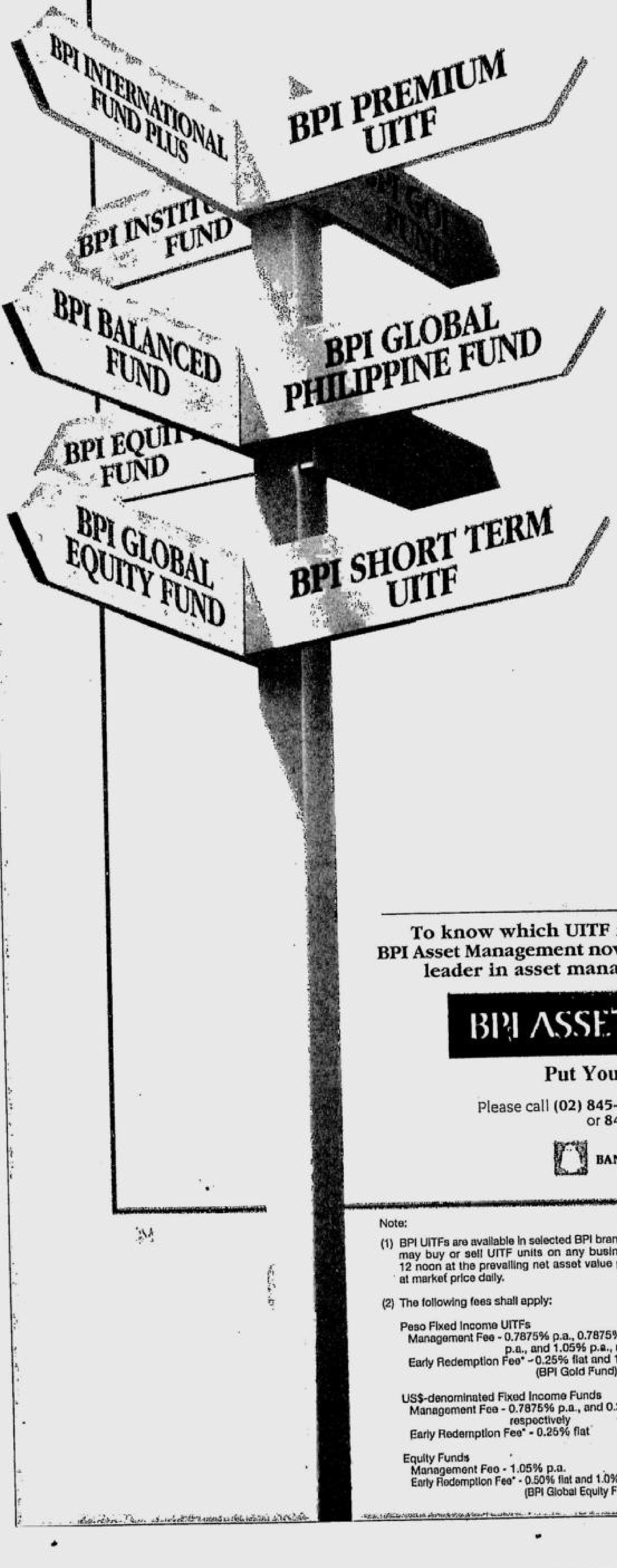

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BOI grants perks to ₱4B worth of hydro power projects in South

By Ronnel W. Domingo

SOUTHERN MINDANAO IS EXPECTED TO harness more power from the region's water resources as the Board of Investments approved the granting of perks to the Aboitiz group's P4.03-billion electricity projects in Davao del Sur.

Trade Undersecretary Elmer C. Hernandez said the project was among the batch of proposals approved for listing with the BOI last week under the agency's simplified registration procedure or one-day approval scheme.

Hernandez, who is also BOI's managing head, said Hedcor Sibulan Inc. would put up two independent mini-hydro power generation projects with installed capacities of 16 MW and 26 MW, respectively.

The proponent is an affiliate of Hydro Energy Development Corp. (Hedcor), which is said to be the country's pioneer in developing mini-hydro facilities or water-driven power plants with capacities of less than 50 MW.

Hedcor Sibulan's projects, which are located in Sta. Cruz town, are expected to create 40 new jobs and start commercial operations by January 2009.

Hernandez said the hydro plants would tap the headwaters of the rivers Sibulan and Baroring and their tributaries.

"The projects' output would be sold to Davao Light & Power Co. and Visayas Electric Co.," he said.

Aboitiz Equity Ventures has interest in Dalight and Veco—which are the third and second largest power distributors after Manila Electric Co.—through its subsidiary Aboitiz Power.

Also, the projects were given pioneer status which qualifies them to six-year tax holidays, duty-free importation of capital equipment and other fiscal and non-fiscal incentives.

Under the 2005 Investments Priorities Plan, power generation projects that use renewable energy are automatically qualified for pioneer status.

The BOI also approved the granting of non-pioneer incentives to all-Filipino firm Fog Horn Inc.'s P404-million venture involving the construction of a tourist accommodation facility.

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HOUSE/LOT: CORINTHIAN, GREENMEADOWS, VALLE VERDE, ACROPOLIS, AYALA ALABANG, HIGHLAN, FUEGO

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GLOBAL FRANCHISE NETWORK

NutriAsia now controls 50.7% of Del Monte

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

NUTRIASIA PACIFIC Ltd., THE joint venture company of Joselito Campos Jr. and San Miguel Corp., acquired a total of 50.72 percent of pineapple products distributor Del Monte Pacific Ltd. as of the end of December 2005.

PricewaterhouseCoopers Corporate Finance Pte Ltd , the financial adviser of NutriAsia, said in a disclosure to the Stock Exchange of Singapore that NutriAsia now had a total of 552.76 million shares or 50.7 percent of Del Monte as of Dec. 30.

As of Dec. 2, NutriAsia had 49.39 percent of the potential issued capital of Del Monte.

NutriAsia was able to secure the acceptance of its offer to buy shares, representing 1.33 percent or another 14.52 million shares, by Del Monte shareholders, making its offer "unconditional." Sources said KPMG Corporate Finance Pte. Ltd., the financial adviser for Del Monte's independent directors, had yet to release its recommendation on the takeover offer lodged by NutriAsia.

NutriAsia earlier agreed to buy the 49.8 percent held by pineapple plantation landlord Martin Lorenzo in Del Monte for $206.5 million. This triggered a mandatory offer for the rest of Del Monte shares. The whole deal is valued at a round $415 million.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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From left to right: Uriel Balboa (MBLIC President) and George Tiu (PLGIC President & COO)

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PARAMOUNT LIFE & GENERAL INSURANCE CORPORATION
MANILA BANKERS LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION

Globe, Smart get 3G frequency assignments

SMART COMMUNICATIONS INC. AND GLOBE Telecom yesterday said they had secured their desired 3G frequency assignments.

The phone firms said this would help hasten their delivery of 3G services to the public.

This followed National Telecommunication Commission's granting of 3G licenses to Smart and Globe, as well as to Digital Telecommunications Philippines and Connectivity Unlimited Resource Enterprise.

3G or Third Generation technology and services would allow consumers to hear and see the party they are contacting and watch television shows while mobile, as well as download and listen to music.

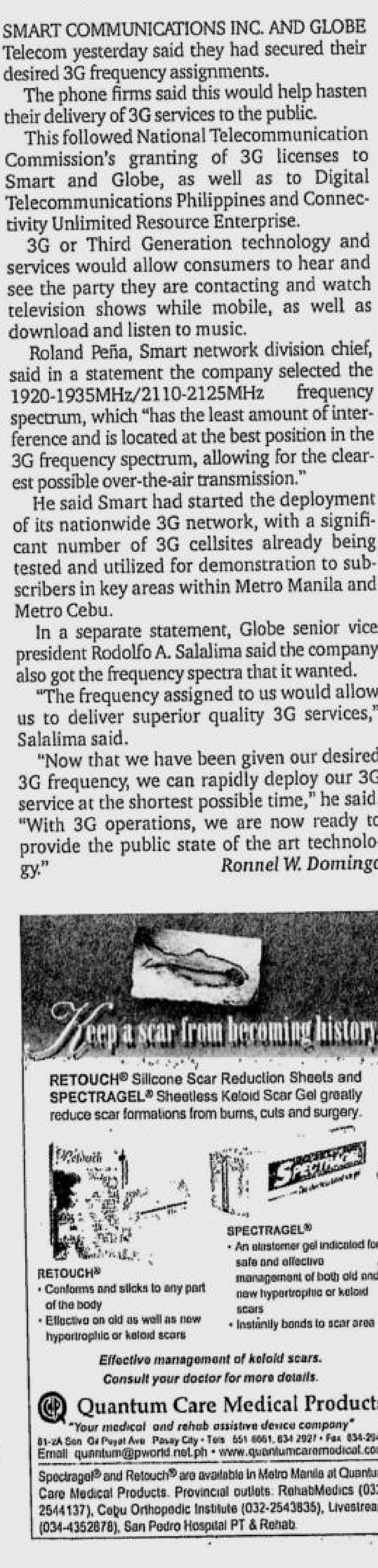
Roland Peña, Smart network division chief, said in a statement the company selected the 1920-1935MHz/2110-2125MHz frequency spectrum, which "has the least amount of interference and is located at the best position in the 3G frequency spectrum, allowing for the clearest possible over-the-air transmission."

He said Smart had started the deployment of its nationwide 3G network, with a significant number of 3G cellsites already being tested and utilized for demonstration to subscribers in key areas within Metro Manila and Metro Cebu.

In a separate statement, Globe senior vice president Rodolfo A. Salalima said the company also got the frequency spectra that it wanted.

"The frequency assigned to us would allow us to deliver superior quality 3G services," Salalima said.

"Now that we have been given our desired 3G frequency, we can rapidly deploy our 3G service at the shortest possible time," he said. "With 3G operations, we are now ready to provide the public state of the art technology." *Ronnel W. Domingo*



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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 3, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	34	34	34	34	76,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	54	55.5	54	55.5	490,600
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	500
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	53	58.5	58	58	34,700
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	32	33	32	32.5	224,400
Philippine National Bank	31.5	32	31.5	32	32,100
Phil. Savings Bank	35	35	35	35	13,000
Security Bank Corp.	34.5	34.5	34	34	3,000
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTION					
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	140	140	140	140	1,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2085	2085	2085	2085	30
Ivantage Corp.	0.6	0.62	0.6	0.62	1,430,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	49	51	49	51	447,900
Manila Electric Co. A	14.25	15	14.25	14.5	18,400
Manila Electric Co. B	21.75	22.25	21.75	22.25	187,900
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.4	1,009,000
Petron Corp.	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.5	534,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	30,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	50,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	24	24	23.5	23.75	17,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	40.5	41.5	40.5	41	232,100
San Miguel Corp. A	64.5	65	64.5	65	20,300
San Miguel Corp. B	89	89.5	89	89.5	13,800
Universal Robina Corp.	19	19.25	18.5	18.5	28,100
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	200,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE& ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.33	0.34	0.32	0.34	3,930,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.78	0.78	0.77	0.77	1,040,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.3	4.5	4.3	4.5	2,675,000
CHEMICALS					
Pryce Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	520,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.0725	0.07	0.07	3,400,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	320	325	317.5	317.5	123,160
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	50,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.85	4.95	4.85	4.95	12,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11	11	11	11	1,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	209,000
APC Group Inc.	0.21	0.215	0.21	0.215	600,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	2,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	60,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.46	1.46	1.46	1.46	20,000
ATN Holdings Inc. B	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	33,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.16	1.1	1.16	6,507,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.05	3.05	209,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.22	1.26	1.22	1.24	1,190,000
House Of Investments Inc.	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	10,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.55	3.5	3.5	155,000
Medco Holdings	0.43	0.43	0.38	0.38	690,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	10,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	100,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	10,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	1,590,000
SM Investments Corp.	242	243	241	241	37,780
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.9	10.25	9.9	10	3,816,000
Belle Corp.	1	1.04	1	1.04	2,310,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.18	0.2	0.175	0.175	1,150,000
Cebu Holdings Inc	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	441,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.88	1.96	1.88	1.96	16,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.23	0.23	0.21	0.215	2,280,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.14	0.16	0.14	0.16	170,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.42	0.43	0.42	0.42	5,740,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	290,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.4	1.46	1.4	1.44	11,397,000
Gotesco Land Inc.B	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	100,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	500,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	1,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	4,452,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.35	13,520,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	66,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	40,000
SM Development Corp.	1.46	1.48	1.44	1.44	130,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.2	8.2	8.1	8.1	514,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	300,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13	13.25	13	13.25	3,700
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	100,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	730	735	730	735	2,350
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.45	3.5	3.45	3.5	1,016,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1810	1815	1810	1815	91,080
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
ISM Communications Corp.	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.049	2,200,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	90,000
Transpacific Broadband	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	25,000
Philweb Corp.	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	7,000,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	50,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	9.3	9.5	9.3	9.5	32,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	20,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.36	1.36	51,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42	232,000
EDUCATION					
Ipeople Inc.	2.9	3.1	2.9	3.05	321,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Paxys Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.2	143,000
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	27,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	135,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	6,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	2,470,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.25	1,290,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.018	0.019	0.018	0.019	68,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.03	0.029	0.029	42,100,000
Omico Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	1,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.32	1.36	1.32	1.34	4,339,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.74	1.76	1.74	1.76	3,863,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	68,600
Vulcan Ind'l	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	350,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	20,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	49,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PLDT 10% Pref Series AA	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	4,800
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	13.25	13.25	13	13	56,500

DISCLOSURES

EXPORT and Industry Bank Inc. will hold a special stockholders' meeting on Jan. 25, 8 a.m., at the Exportbank Plaza along Chino Roces Ave., Makati City. Record date is Jan. 3.

***

PHILIPPINE Tobacco Flue-Curing & Redrying Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Feb. 6, 2 p.m., at the company's principal office at 802 A. Bonifacio St., Balintawak, Quezon City. Stockholders of record as of Dec. 20 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting. ***Compiled by Cyril L. Bonabente, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

January 3, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.845451	1.000000	52.9030
Japan	Yen	0.007171	0.008482	0.4487
United Kingdom	Pound	1.457051	1.723400	91.1730
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.109044	0.128977	6.8233
Switzerland	Franc	0.643418	0.761035	40.2610
Canada	Dollar	0.725336	0.857927	45.3869
Singapore	Dollar	0.509369	0.602482	31.8731
Australia	Dollar	0.620060	0.733407	38.7994
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.243112	2.653153	140.3598
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.225448	0.266660	14.1071
Brunei	Dollar	0.507840	0.600673	31.7774
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000086	0.000102	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.020618	0.024387	1.2901
UAE	Dirham	0.230193	0.272272	14.4040
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.182800	62.5737
Argentina	Peso	0.279489	0.330579	17.4886
Brazil	Real	0.362233	0.428449	22.6662
Denmark	Kroner	0.133995	0.158489	8.3845
India	Rupee	0.018805	0.022242	1.1767
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.223723	0.264620	13.9992
Mexico	New Peso	0.079467	0.093994	4.9726
New Zealand	Dollar	0.576785	0.682221	36.0915
Norway	Kroner	0.125348	0.148262	7.8435
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014157	0.016745	0.8859
South Africa	Rand	0.134018	0.158516	8.3860
Korea	Won	0.000836	0.000989	0.0523
Sweden	Kroner	0.106302	0.125734	6.6517
Syria	Pound	0.016287	0.019264	1.0191
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025807	0.030525	1.6149
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000394	0.000466	0.0247

Castilaloy and 'kuripot'

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

THE ABOITIZES MAY LOOK AND SPEAK Castilian, but the Basque transplants have apparently adopted the Cebuano "kuripot" trait when it comes to paying themselves and their top officers.

Aboitiz Equity Ventures CEO Jon Ramon Aboitiz, COO Erramon Aboitiz and three top AEV officers were estimated to have received a little over P29 million in 2005 salaries and bonuses combined, or about P5.8 million each on average, on the back of a P2.4-billion net income their stewardship turned in for shareholders of the holding company in 2004.

In contrast, Anscor CEO Andres Soriano III, his brother Eduardo and three other top officers of the Soriano holding company received on average of over P8 million each (or P40.47 million in all) in compensation, on the back of P505 million in 2004 profits.

The Aboitizes even looked twice more efficient in generating shareholder value, at half the cost of the executive package, compared to International Container Terminal Services Inc., whose CEO, Enrique Razon Jr., is another driven member, like Enrique "Endika" Aboitiz Jr., of the so-called GMA Castilaloy Cabinet.

Razon and four top ICTSI executives were estimated to have received last year nearly P52 million in compensation, or about P10.4 million each, in return for generating P1.06 billion in 2004 profits.

Despite their efficiency, the Aboitizes were still eclipsed last year by the Zobels of Ayala Corp., who turned in more bang for the executive buck. The top Ayala executive corps may be twice bigger, numbering 10, and receive on the whole a far fatter package, about P121.58 million (or P12.158 million each on average) in salaries and bonuses combined, but CEO Jaime Augusto and his brother Fernando in return chalked up more than P7.1 billion in profits for the conglomerate in 2004.

That means that for every peso received, the Zobel brothers-led executive team returned about P585 in profit, that's 585 times, as against the Aboitizes' P415.

Bankers' PPP index

METROBANK, not Chinabank as we had reported Monday, still holds the record of paying top peso for their top executives.

Chinabank chair Gilbert Dee, president/CEO Peter Dee and three others on average receive about P12.7 million each (the total 2005 compensation package for the five was estimated at P63.35 million), not P15.8 million each as had been reported.

Metrobank, on the other hand, may have reported a lower P60.08-million package for its top executives, but only four, led by taipan/CEO George Ty, divvied the pie, getting an average of over P15 million each.

Chinabank has proven to be a quiet money-machine for the Dees and, now, taipan Henry Sy, but the latter's own Banco de Oro, it turns out, spins out more money for every peso paid to top management.

Per our PPP (profit per pay) index, BDO president Nestor Tan and five others, who received a total of P41.77 million last year on top of producing P2.0156 billion in net profit in 2004, led their affiliate with a P48.25 return for every P1 received.

Chinabank, in contrast, posted a lower PPP index of nearly 42.89.

Among the big boys, the team of Aurelio Montinola III at Bank of the Philippine Islands, which reported nearly twice as much profits than Metrobank in 2004, was easily the most efficient money spinner.

Generating P6.668 billion in profits as against their compensation package of P72.127 million, the Montinola team cranked out nearly P92.45 profit for every peso paid them.

(The 2004 BPI profits were actually generated under the stewardship of Xavier Loinaz.)

Heard through the grapevine

JUSTICE Secretary Raul Gonzalez has denied the appeal of former Eastern Telecom CEO Salvador Hizon and his former law partner Luis Lokin Jr. to stop the filing of the estafa case filed against the two by their former law firm partners, now Iloilo Rep. Rolex Suplico and Angara chief of staff Demaree Raval.

The estafa complaint stemmed from Suplico and Raval allegedly not getting their P33.7 million share each, out of the P362 million in sequestered cash dividends for Marcos telecom crony Manuel Nieto, whose release the Hizon law firm had facilitated.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

7-yr T-bond rate drops to 9%

From page B1

He said the sharp decline in the seven-year T-bond rate indicated that market confidence brought about by the positive fiscal climate was not only short term.

Last Monday, the market also responded well to the issuance of treasury bills, whose rates declined across the board, with the rate of the 91-day bills hitting 4.961 percent, the lowest since August 2002.

Finance officials attributed the declining interest rates to the implementation of the government's fiscal reform agenda, seen to have significantly trimmed down the budget deficit in 2005.

The VAT Reform Law, implemented on Nov. 1 and considered as the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform programs, was estimated to generate P81.4 billion in additional revenue yearly and boost efforts to achieve a zero-deficit goal by 2008.

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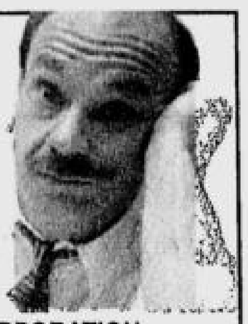

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MOTORING

Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

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'Back to the future'

Text and photos by Tessa R. Salazar

THE YEAR JUST PASSED HAS PROduced some eye-popping automotive designs and prototypes, as well as technologies that may make one oil-strapped individual ask "why didn't they think of that earlier, before Opec (Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries) started running our lives?"

INQUIRER Motoring is fortunate to catch a glimpse of the near future in 2005, especially during the last quarter. Almost all of them are simply way ahead of their time (though some are already planned for commercial distribution in the next two or three years). Nevertheless, we just can't wait to lay our hands on these clean, sleek and shiny babies.

Environment-friendly car

The Japanese kei-minicar is also known as the "i" and is targeted at potential owners looking for an environment-friendly car of reasonable size. It has the rear midship layout, a first for Mitsubishi Motors. It is powered by a new 3-cylinder intercooler turbocharged Mivec engine that pumps out a 47kW (64ps) of power. Fuel economy is more than 15 percent better than an equivalent model powered by the current turbocharge unit.

The other side of Mitsubishi Delica that we're not aware of, and hopefully the side that opens the right doors is the D:5 concept for the next generation Delica model. It uses the same electronically controlled four-wheel-drive system as the Outlander: a 2.4-liter Mivec engine, sports mode, 6-speed (CVT).

If angels needed to drive a car, this is what they would choose, wings down: the Orochi Nude Top Roadster, a design proposal from Mitsuoka Motors Co. Ltd. The body dimensions are real, but since this is just a design proposal, the engine, fuel type and transmission systems are yet unknown (perhaps to be decided by a "higher order"?).With gull-wing doors that seem poised to fly to the heavens, the designers went as far as not to attach any side mirrors so as not to "spoil" the design. Or maybe they.knew angels had eyes at the back of their heads.

Most economical

Another crowd drawer is a speed bike that will never lose its footing. Helmets, however, are still required, mind you.

Volkswagen's prototype—the Ecoracer—is a research vehicle attempting to make history as the most economical sports car of its time. To earn that, it would have to average 3.4 liters of fuel consumed for 100 km, and while at it attain a top speed of 230 kph. To help it along, the body is made of carbon fiber, and its centrally located engine weighs only 850 kg. It's planned to accelerate from 0 to 100 kph in 6.3 seconds. And no, it's not gasoline-powered. It would actually run on diesel, in a next-generation turbocharged diesel engine producing 100Kw of power.

72 contenders for Car of the Year

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

FROM 58 TO 72 IS A BIG JUMP, but that is how many four-wheeled motor vehicles are in the running for the second Car of the Year Philippines (Cotyp) Award compared to the first time. Coincidentally, the Car Awards Group Inc. (Cagi), the nonstock, nonprofit association that initiated the Cotyp in 2004, has grown in membership from 40 motoring-oriented journalists representing a dozen media outfits to nearly 70. In the last quarter of 2005, membership was opened not only to those covering the motoring beat but also those from three dozen print, broadcast and cyber media organizations covering related areas of interest.

The surge in the number of entries promises a bigger, more exciting contest for the 2005-06 Cotyp trophy. In a letter, Cagi/Cotyp president Manny de los Reyes, editor in chief of Speed Magazine and a feature writer of The Philippine Star's motoring section, informed car manufacturers that the new Cagi board has drafted a new set of rules and criteria to avoid category overlaps. "More importantly," he wrote, "the categorization is now more price-sensitive to reflect the realities of the market."

Increase

The number of categories has been increased from 10 to 11 with the 11 best-in-class winners getting a shot at the top title. With eight cars vying for the Best Mini/Subcompact of the Year Award, another eight for the Best Compact Sedan, 11 for the Best Executive Sedan, five for the Best Luxury Sedan, three for the Best Ultra-Luxury Sedan, 11 for the Best Entry-Level Sport Utility Vehicle, seven for the Best Luxury SUV, three for the Best Ultra-Luxury SUV, five for the Best Entry-Level Multipurpose Vehicle (MPV instead of the Asian Utility Vehicle or AUV), seven for the Best Luxury MPV and four for the Best Pickup of the Year Award, Cagi members will be extra busy during the scheduled weekend test dates in January and February 2006 at the Forest Hills Golf Club complex in Antipolo, Rizal.

Car models that did not win in their respective categories last year and have not undergone major changes are automatically disqualified. Last year's top picks and the Cotyp 2004-05 will be included so that they may defend their titles. Vehicles must have been made available on the market from Sept. 1, 2004 to Dec. 31, 2005 to qualify for entry.

Aside from the 11 major awards and the Cotyp Award, seven special awards will be given to the Safest Vehicle, Best Value for Money, Best in Design, Best in Technical Innovation, Best in Fuel Efficiency, Best Marketing Campaign and Media Choice of the Year.

Tests

Cotyp tests consist of a quantitative phase and a qualitative phase. In the quanti, a control group made up of five drivers using ·precision instruments will evaluate zero to 100 kph acceleration, braking power, fuel efficiency and cabin noise. The quali tests will be conducted by Cagi member-journalists who will rate each car on handling, design, safety, innovation, driving satisfaction/ride quality and value for money using a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 as the highest score.

As was done in the first Cotyp at the request of Automobile Association Philippines, the SGV accounting firm will tally the votes and the results will be kept strictly confidential until the gala awards night dinner in March. To ensure impartiality and avoid a conflict of interest, Cagi from the start has not accepted nor solicited the sponsorship of car manufacturers and dealers. This is an ethical policy that Cagi is determined to follow through the years.

New inroads

With Cotyp, Cagi will honor car manufacturers that have made new inroads in the automotive field. Aside from striving to be a cumulative voice in improving quality and setting new benchmarks in design, innovation, safety and performance for the auto industry, Cagi aims to improve the evaluative skills of motoring journalists by providing a venue to test-drive motor vehicles against quantitative and qualitative criteria.

Motor Trend magazine, which pioneered the Car of the Year concept 56 years ago in the United States, says it best: "Car of the Year isn't a comparison test… it's hard to find common ground when you simply look at the hardware. So we don't. Instead, we evaluate each contender against three criteria: Superiority/Engineering Excellence—design advancement, utilization of resources and safety are the key components of this criterion. . . Significance—how well does the vehicle to the job its maker intended it to do? . . . Value—Each vehicle is compared with its rivals in its market segment. While a vehicle with a low sticker price might seem to have an advantage, it may not be as good a value as a more expensive vehicle that offers higher performance and build quality along with better functionality, lower running costs, and higher resale."

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: A woman's favorite position is CEO.

* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

BMW I Series

BMW's only one

By Charles E. Buban

DURING LAST MONTH'S press launch of Canyon Ranch (Century Communities Corp.'s premier development in Carmona, Cavite), guests were shuttled to the site aboard a fleet of 1-Series (seven 120i executives, to be exact), BMW Philippines' latest offering in the compact car market.

It was also this writer's chance to experience the five-door hatchback that BMW Philippines corporate communications and marketing director Lito German described as the first and only premium car in the ultra competitive compact car class.

"The 1-Series is a blend of prestige and performance at a reasonably affordable entry price. By extending its model range BMW has reacted to the needs of a young, active and discerning generation of consumers," German said.

Here in the Philippines, the 1-Series is available in three four-cylinder, gasoline engine variants: 1.6 liter (generating 115 horsepower), 1.8 liter (129 hp), and 2.0 liter (150 hp). Only the 1.6 variants are mated to a five-speed manual gearbox with the rest fitted with a six-speed automatic gearbox.

Rear-wheel driven

But while most car manufacturers would make their hatchbacks front-wheel drive, BMW has decided to do something different: make the 1-Series rear-wheel drive.

While most carmakers will choose a front-wheel drive package because it will cost them less to manufacture (while some might further argue that it is also safer since front-wheel-drive cars tend to have a much easier to control handling characteristics), BMW believed going for a rear-wheel drive will give the 1-Series a particularly well-balanced weight distribution (50:50 in the 1-Series), a steering system free from drive-train influence, and optimal traction under a full load.

"It's no surprise that rear-wheel drive is so successful in higher vehicle segments, in motor sports and now also in the compact class, where the 1-Series is making its mark as a car with the highest possible standards in dynamics, comfort and, last but not least, safety," German added.

Setting new standards

Indeed, the 1-Series' safety features are setting new standards in the compact class. These include providing the car with six airbags (including side and curtain head airbags that are helpful during side-on collision) and a system that controls the chassis, suspension, steering brakes and even engine power to make them all work together in preventing the car from swerving out of control during abrupt evasive maneuvers or driving on slippery surfaces.

Another unique feature is the 1-Series' run flat tires. Made exclusively for BMW 1-series, the run flat tires mounted on the car's 16-inch steel wheels will allow the driver to continue up to 150 km without any pressure in the tire.

As BMW's entry level model, the 1-Series will be priced starting at P1.595 million and will be available in 12 variants with the 120i Tech going at P2.260 million.

Real choices in a very real world

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

LET'S SUPPOSE THAT, LIKE MANY OUT there, you are a speed freak, but one who's addiction to velocity is so far along that even your home PC is an overclocked, water-cooled, bit munching behemoth. There is no lane in your life other than the one that says, "For overtaking only."

Maybe you're one of those who live to painstakingly beat time. You get your rise from clocking faster and faster drive times from home to elsewhere—even to the neighborhood convenience store. Is everyone in character now? Alright then, spend the next five seconds thinking of an automobile that would be the single perfect transportation tool for such a compulsive human being.

Philippine factor

You realize of course that whatever example of automotive exhilaration you had chosen, its ability to perform "as advertised" in a real world situation is seriously in question, more so on typical Philippine roads. Yes, I can hear the whole lot of you complaining about only being given a few seconds to decide what car would be most apt.

Add this handicap to the notion of operating said vehicle in a local context and the results are predictably catastrophic. It is truly sad that this Philippine factor, one of shaky public works and infrastructure (with an even less stable political and economic clime), dooms the practical ownership of many truly remarkable automobiles.

Unfair as the questioning may have been, rest assured that there is a point to this entire exercise. Dramatically and incorrectly, we used a sole deciding factor in choosing a vehicle.

Surely there is nothing wrong with a fast car, but does every car you own have to be fast and obstinately so? What happens when we expand the "sole deciding factor" argument to those of a single make, of a certain nation or worse yet of a premium price point? Does a single product attribute. merit an absolute, gospel-like selling point, one that transcends practicality and common sense? The marketing stiffs at many vehicle manufacturers would like to have you think this is rightfully so.

What they'd really like to happen is for us to act like the speed compulsive that we role-played earlier. If we can already convince ourselves that we desperately want what they're selling, then the marketing man's job is done. The transaction is closed, with your hard-earned currency fueling the brand image that will lead many more consumers down the same path. We would practically be buying blind—single-minded and hopeless as those who do not bother to look at a car's entire package. In very real terms, they are trying to make us revert to base impulse when deciding a purchase. When one starts to take notice of the spiels about "brand DNA" and is regaled to no end about decades of Motorsport success, you know the road to an unbiased choice is definitely uphill from that moment on.

Finding the right vehicle

Beyond the shiny badges, metallic paint and their purported pedigrees, all automobiles must be judged as to how much of a fundamentally good car can be found in any given package. Does the vehicle fit your real needs and not the wishes that were brainwashed into you by the profound commercials or the "talk dirty to me" sales pitch?

Only the actual end-user would know if a 612 Scaglietti or a Kia Picanto would be the right vehicle for the "speed task" that we gave some thought to earlier. There is an empirical answer in there somewhere and the moment you free your mind from the millions of dollars that the manufacturers have spent in advertising, an answer starts to become agonizingly apparent.

The exercise of choice actually finds the buying public in a better position than the motoring journalist. Often times, trying to understand a complex, expensive and intricate product, like the automobile, makes one look like a nosey nitpicker quite a lot. The worst that could happen is to get labeled a nuisance customer and be asked, politely, to take your business elsewhere. Try to write truthfully and critically about said cars and things get worse—one starts looking like a hack waiting to get paid.

Talking with Takase

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

DO YOU KNOW WHY THE GOOD-LOOKING Kengo Takase joined the Mitsubishi Motors Co.?

"It's because of the Galant," he said. "That car changed my life."

Takase was fresh out of college when he started job-hunting. Before embarking on his mission, he came across the Galant, then the newest "car on the block" and, immediately, he said he fell in love with it.

* * *

Armed with his diploma, Takase traveled from his birthplace of Okayama to Hiroshima, approximately a distance of 150 kilometers, to apply for a job. Mitsubishi has a plant in Hiroshima.

Some 24 years later, Takase, 50, is president and CEO of Mitsubishi Motors Philippines.

Now on his third year in that post, Takase, whose tummy-less, lean build would easily qualify him as a bantam weight boxer, said he finds himself facing "interesting challenges" amid the fast-changing landscape in the motoring industry.

* * *

"The automotive business here has changed rapidly over the years," said Takase, noting the slew of new vehicles rolling out of the assembly lines the past two years or so.

He said no vehicle company in the country would survive if it could not cope with the drastic, if not radical, transformation of the vehicle market.

The past year alone, Toyota stunned the motoring world when it unleashed three vehicles that would soon prove to be all best-sellers: Fortuner, Hi-Lux and the locally assembled Innova.

* * *

Not to be outdone, the others followed suit, notably Nissan and Isuzu.

While Nissan made a killing with its X-Trail, refurbishing it with another equally smashing model the year past to the delight of Raymond Tribdino and Val de Leon, Isuzu would not be denied.

The Alterra was so stunningly state-of-the-art that the Isuzu model proved to be almost equal to the Fortuner in the area of demand for the vehicle. So robust was its acceptance by car buffs that Alterra would soon find customers queuing up for it in much the same way as the Fortuner.

* * *

A friend of mine, not so much sold to compact SUVs before, was so enamored with the Alterra that he made it a point to be one of the first owners of the new Alterra just before the year ended. He became the first Alterra owner in his village and he rang me on the phone to announce it.

According to my friend and other Alterra buyers like him, the Isuzu pride is not only a "gas miser" but also is "the perfect ride for a family that loves to go to the country for picnics or weekend vacations."

My, do I see Isuzu's Art Balmadrid, Myrna Gonzales, Timmy Naval and Ronald "Isuzu Joe" Baladad grinning from ear to ear?

* * *

But back to Kengo Takase, who plays golf for relaxation like Mel Dizon, Mitsubishi's senior vice president for marketing.

Always smiling that if you don't know who he is, Takase could be mistaken for an insurance salesman eternally looking happy.

"He is so friendly and gentle that he fits the tag as the perfect boss one can ever dream of," said Arlan Reyes, Mitsubishi's trouble-shooting guy under Froy Dytiangquin.

Any major plans for Mitsubishi in 2006?

"We need to come up with new models, especially in the passenger car category," said Takase. "Hopefully, we could build one, or even more, this year."

I wish you luck, Takase-san.

* * *

QUOTE ME. Lanes for overtaking at NLEX are reserved for motorists wishing to overtake. You ignore that and either you don't understand English at all or you are nuts fit for the mental hospital.

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Editor Aries Espinosa

A beach resort a 'million miles away' from stress

IMAGINE THE MOST AMAZING SPA services and luxurious accommodations at an exclusive villa. What do you get? The perfect holiday, of course! Sometimes it is absolutely necessary to drop everything, to stop the clock and just get lost in a beautiful vacation. And what other way to attain that? By allowing yourself to be wooed by the charms of the Pearl Farm Beach Resort, with its unmatched natural beauty and friendly staff.

The resort is located on the quiet side of Samal Island in the southern part of the Philippines. Samal is a beautiful, tranquil, exotic island with a coastline adorned with white sand beaches, abundant marine life, mangroves, rock formations and charming landscape of coconut palms, flowering plants and fruit-bearing trees. Once a pearl farm where thousands of white-lipped oysters were cultivated for their pink, white and gold pearls, this 14-hectare spread beckons with the promise of a relaxing private retreat, a million miles away from the noise and congestion of civilization.

Just a mere 45-minute boat ride from the wharf of Waterfront Hotel in the city of Davao, this haven invites visitors to experience body and soul rejuvenation. With 73 guestrooms, suites, cottages on stilts perched above the sea and exclusive villas all designed from Maranao and Samal ethnic influences, and surrounded by abundant greenery, it is truly a serene oasis.

Aside from de-stressing while lazing around the mesmerizing infinity pool, or sunbathing on the spotless white sands, guests can pamper themselves by availing of massage and spa services at the Ylang-Ylang Soothing Lounge. Surrounded by trees and thick foliage, nothing is more soothing than the sounds of trickling water from a nearby waterfall and the mild scent emanating from candles to go with a heavenly massage. The lounge is certifiably a unique spa experience, using health and beauty products made out of the most natural of ingredients.

For the more active guests, the resort has badminton, tennis and basketball courts available 24/7. A pathway intended for joggers may also be used to walk off the extra calories from the oh-so sumptuous lunch or dinner buffets served at the Maranao Restaurant, while breathing in fresh air. The restaurant features delicious Filipino and international cuisine, with (fresh) seafood specialties. A panorama of water sports activities is also accessible, which includes wave runners, wind surfing, water polo and a fun banana boat ride for the youngsters or the young-at-heart. Sea kayaks, hobie cats, and water skis are also on hand. The waters around Pearl Farm have been declared a marine sanctuary. Aside from protecting the abundant marine life, the waters also nurture two sunken WWII Japanese vessels. The island boasts a total of 17 dive sites just waiting to be explored.

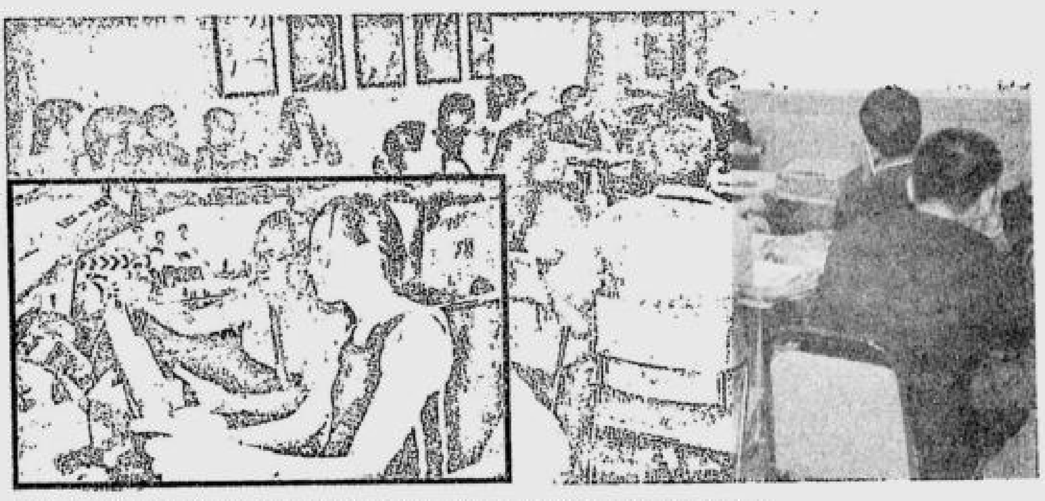
Pearl Farm Beach Resort is a popular site for special intimate events. Malipano Island, a secluded island located a few hundred meters off Samal Island, is where seven exclusive villas of the resort are located. The groups of villas are also designed from Maranao and Samal ethnic influences. The traditional Philippine hat, the salakot, inspires the shapes of the villas' roofs. It offers three holes of golf and a private beach with white sand. Accessible by speedboat or pump boat, the island is perfect for romantic weddings and occasions as such. The expansive Malipano gardens can easily be transformed into a picturesque setting for a tropical wedding reception. The Malipano Gazebo on the other end of the island is another alternative for intimate and private gatherings.

For pasalubong, guests may visit the Butik, which offers a variety of local treasures. From local handicrafts, native outfits and even the latest in trendy beachwear. To end the flawless day, guests can take a nightcap or two at the Parola Bar and sing along to popular tunes, or just simply take in the stunning views of the sea, the famous Mt. Apo, or gaze at the night sky scattered with stars.

Pearl Farm Beach Resort is managed by Fuego Hotels & Properties and owned by Anflo Resort Development Corp (Anflo Group of Companies). For inquiries and reservations, call the island resort at (082)221-9970 to 73, fax (082)221-9979, the Davao City offices at (082)235-0876, (082)234-0601, or its Manila offices at 750-1896, 750-1898, 893-2093, or fax 750-1894. E-mail pearlfarm@fuegohotels.com, or log on to www.pearlfarmresort.com or www.fuegohotels.com.

SMART CITED FOR TRIBUTE AND SERVICE TO PINOY SEAFARERS

Smart Communications Inc was recently cited for 'bringing Filipino seafarers abroad vessels in the high seas closer to loved ones back home' through efficient telecommunications services like its satellite service SmartLink. The citation was given by the Filipino Association for Mariners' Employment (FAME) Inc during 'Ang Marino, Bow!', a concert in tribute to the Filipino seafarer staged by Smart in partnership with FAME. Shown receiving the plaque of appreciation is Smart public affairs group head Ramon R. Isberto with (left) Smart public access department head Tina Mariano. Also shown are (from center) guests of honor Department of Labor and Employment Undersecretary Manuel Imson and Department of Transportation and Communications Undersecretary Agustin R. Bengzon, and FAME president Josephine J. Francisco.



PETRON TEACHES EFFICIENT DRIVING TECHNIQUES

Petron's Fuel Drive at the CCP Complex, Diosdado Macapagal Avenue, taught motorists several driving techniques to save time, money, and effort. Philippine racing legend Pocholo Ramirez (shown inset, left), sons and racing veterans Kookie and Louis gave emphasis on proper braking, making correct U-turns and parking. Petron, Xtra Unleaded, the Automobile Association of the Philippines, DZRH, DZMB and Yes-FM spearheaded the event.

World's most famous beagle offers trendy but practical clothing, footwear

NEARLY 56 YEARS AFTER Charles M. Schulz's "Peanuts" comics strip was first published, Snoopy remains to be the world's most famous Beagle. The lovable and eccentric dog has achieved superstar status with his vivid imagination and silent wit.

The worldwide success of Snoopy can easily be measured. Printed in over 2,600 newspapers, in over 100 countries around the world, translated in over 60 languages and loved by millions of fans, Snoopy-mania has been licensed and franchised with over 200,000 products, including clothing and footwear, worldwide.

The Snoopy brand of quality children's apparel and footwear has been in the Philippines for 22 years, and Wishbone Marketing Co, the exclusive Philippine licensee through the Beagle Place Boutique, has witnessed unprecedented success with 16 free-standing stores in most major malls across Metro Manila and counters in all Shoemart, Robinsons, Landmark, and most department stores in major cities across the country.

For 18 years, Beagle Place still maintains the loyalty and patronage of avid Snoopy fans across Manila, with its locally produced line of children's clothing. And for the first time since its initial launch, the Beagle Place Boutique recently launched and presented to the public its 2005 Beagle Place Holiday Collection.

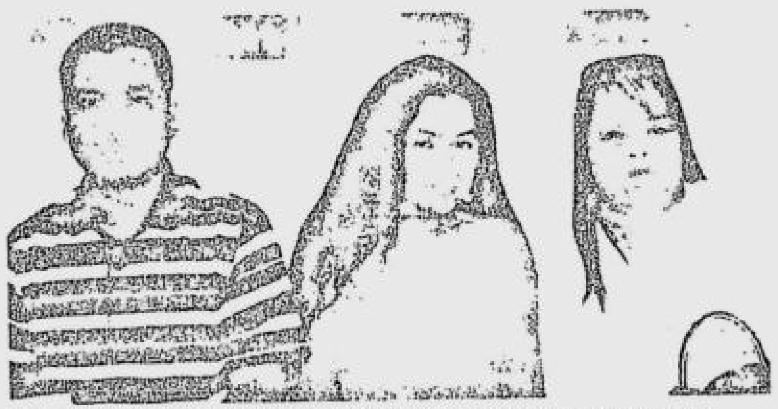
Charmaine Zamora, one of the key partners at Beagle Place, explains their vision for the future. "We want the brand to keep up with the times. Nowadays, even young children choose what they want to wear. We are giving the kids many more options than ever before. We are experimenting more; clothes can be mixed and matched, in a full range of colors, fabrications, and details. The polos for boys are also worn by girls and we're breaking old fashion barriers such as pink being for girls and blue only for boys."

The Snoopy line of children's wear appeals especially to parents' standards of practicality in terms of price and quality. It makes a strong point of keeping its prices down and imposing the strictest quality control standards using the best US standard cotton and long-lasting threads. The prices range from P200 to P300 for shirts.

Pamela Cua, one of the main partners at Beagle Place, is proud to point out that all Beagle Place clothing are Philippine-made, with yet the highest standards maintained. "One of our regular customers mentioned that the Beagle Place clothing she purchased for her children years ago could still now be worn by her grandchildren. That, in itself, is one of the greatest compliments and shows how good the quality of our products are."

The Beagle Place Boutique carries a full line of clothing for children aged 6 months to 9 years old. Pam is quick to correct the misconception that Beagle Place only carries clothing for boys. "We manufacture casual jeans, jackets, shorts, blouses, skirts, dresses and semi-formal clothes for boys and girls."

What gives Beagle Place its edge over any of the other character-based labels is that the collections are complete from tops to bottoms, including all kinds of footwear, from rubber shoes to sandals, school shoes, and party shoes. And the styles are not boring, some being quite fun and funky, in fact.



HANNI INKS CONTRACT WITH IJ MAGIC CREAM

Sexy singer and actress Hanni Miller is the official product endorser of IJ Magic Cream, the newest magic gel that whitens all dark areas of the body. The actress, who has emerged victorious in her battle with uterine cancer, is back after almost a two-year hiatus. IJ Magic Cream is the only 'authentic' brand in the market that whitens the skin and evens out skin tone. Not only that, it also helps cure other skin problems, such as acne, freckles, pimples and other harmful bacteria. IJ Magic Cream contains no harmful ingredients, making it safe to use for the whole family. Hanni is now promoting the brand in her TV guestings, out-of-town shows and other singing engagements. Early this year, Hanni is slated to record an album under Dyna Records. IJ Magic Cream is available in all ZenZest outlets, leading drugstores, beauty shops and supermarkets nationwide. It is distributed locally by Saramed Pharmaceuticals Inc. For more details, call 0921-7697254 or 0921-6069233 and look for Irene Reyes. Shown are, from left, Ricardo Reyes, president of Saramed Pharmaceuticals, Hanni Miller and Irene Reyes, general manager of Saramed Pharma during the formal signing of the contract held at Mario's Restaurant.

Luzon 4x4 Federation fetes 2005 series winners, hosts

THE LUZON 4X4 FEDERATION feted the hosts and winners of the 2005 series in a yearend gathering held at the Virgin Café on Tomas Morato Street, Quezon City Dec. 7.

Plaques of appreciation were awarded by Luzon 4x4 Federation directors Blue Reyna and Olson Camacho, representatives of clubs who hosted this year's event, to Pol Herrera of the Del Monte 4 Wheelers; Boyet Rivera of the Land Cruiser Club of the Philippines Nueva Ecija Chapter; Ronnie Mata of the Bongabon 4x4 Club; Josel Bituin of the Land Cruiser Club of the Philippines Pampanga Chapter; Rey Liwanag of the Angeles 4 Wheelers; Councilor Sid Lapuz and Jun Nocom of Muñoz Science City; and Boyie Doblada of the Rizal Offroaders.

Sponsors were also given recognition during the event. Lending their support to the 2005 series were Petron Rev-X, Silverwind, Bilstein, Makna Marketing, Hummer Philippines, Clark Development Corp, Sunbolt Sports Drink and Goodyear.

Receiving their trophies from the Federation directors were winners in the different categories, namely, Marcelino Mendoza (champion), Numeriano Samson (2nd) and Gerry Acuña (3rd), Production Class series; Lucy Sy (champion) and Alex Tan (2nd), Navigator of the Year series; Cocoy Ramos (champion), Edison Dungca (2nd), Omer Dungca (3rd), Arthur Azcuna (4th) and Noel Dizon (5th), 4-Cylinder Class; and Noel Bartolome Jr (champion), Dante Dungca (2nd), Noel Dizon (3rd), Caesar Villacorta (4th) and John Sambo (5th), 6-Cylinder Class.

Special guest at the awarding and dinner event was Automobile Association of the Philippines (AAP) motorsports committee chair Mandy Eduque, who congratulated the Luzon 4x4 Federation for its efforts to organize the off-road community and encouraged the recently aligned Luzon 4x4 Federation, Visayas 4x4 Federation and Mindanao 4x4 Federation to proceed with bringing off-roading in the Philippines to common ground with the end in view of naming a "National Champion" each year.

Eduque also expressed enthusiasm for the combined efforts of the AAP and the aligned federations to have Filipino off-roaders participate in international competitions, such as the recent event in China to which the Luzon 4x4 Federation and the AAP sent Noel Bartolome and Olson Camacho.

Reyna, a former championship-winning rally navigator in his time, meanwhile, thanked the sponsors and supporters of 4x4 events in the country as well as the host clubs of the 2005 events for all their assistance and support in spite of the hard times.

According to Reyna, "Following the successful staging of the 2005 series, which comprised seven events and included two rally-raids, a format with fast growing participation, I am extending this invitation to competitors, hosts and sponsors to join next year's season which will have six events, three of which will have the closed circuit format and the other three will be rally-raids."

4X4
FEDERATION

SHOWN, from left, are Ondo Apat of Davao Mindanao; Tim Moreno of Mindanao Fun Club; Noel Bartolome of Land Cruiser Club of the Philippines; Luzon 4x4 Federation president Blue Reyna; Bong Jubac of Mindanao Fun Club and Olson Camacho, director of Luzon 4x4 Federation coming together for the yearend celebration and awards night of the Luzon 4x4 Federation Series.

Reyna also announced the alignment of the Luzon 4x4 Federation, the Visayas 4x4 Federation and the Mindanao 4x4 Federation, which will promote off-roading on a national scale with standardized rules and officiating guidelines. Luzon 4x4 Federation has also taken the lead in making representations with other 4x4 organizations in Asia regarding international events.

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Republic of the Philippines

COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

Manila

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES AND PERIODS OF PROHIBITED ACTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE FEBRUARY 18, 2006 PLEBISCITE TO RATIFY THE CONVERSION OF THE CITY OF TARLAC FROM A COMPONENT CITY TO A HIGHLY URBANIZED CITY.
x- -x

ABALOS, Benjamin S.	Chairman
JAVIER, Rufino S.B.,	Commissioner
SADAIN, Mehol K.,	Commissioner
BORRA, Resurreccion Z.,	Commissioner
TUASON, Florentino A. Jr.,	Commissioner
BRAWNER, Romeo A.,	Commissioner

Promulgated: 22 December 2005

RESOLUTION NO. 7617

Pursuant to the powers vested in it by the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code, the Local Government Code (Republic Act No. 7160), Republic Act No. 7166, and other election laws, the Commission on Elections **RESOLVED** to adopt, as it hereby **RESOLVES** to adopt, the following Calendar of Activities and Periods of Prohibited Acts for the February 18, 2006 plebiscite to ratify the conversion of Tarlac City from a component city to a highly urbanized city, to wit:

DATE/PERIOD	PLEBISCITE ACTIVITIES	PROHIBITED ACTS COVERED/INVOLVED
January 18, 2006 (WED) to February 20, 2006 (MON)	PLEBISCITE PERIOD	1. Bearing, carrying or transporting firearms or other deadly weapons in public places, including any building, street, park, private vehicle or public conveyance, even if licensed to possess or carry the same, unless authorized in writing by the Commission. (Sec. 261 (p) (q) (s) OEC as amended by Sec. 32 R.A. No. 7166; 2. Suspension of elective local officials. (Sec. 261 (x) OEC); 3. Transfer of officers and employees in the Civil Service. (Sec. 261 (h) OEC); 4. Organization or maintenance of reaction forces, strike forces or other similar forces. (Sec. 261 (u) OEC).
January 18, 2006 (SAT) to February 18, 2006 (SAT)		1. Appointment or hiring of new employees. Sec. 261 (g) OEC); 2. Creation or filling up of new positions. (Sec. 261 (g) OEC); 3. Promotions or giving of salary increases, remuneration or privilege. (Sec. 261 (g) OEC); 4. Construction of public works, delivery of materials for public works and issuance of treasury warrants or similar devices for a future undertaking chargeable against public funds. (Sec. 261 (w) OEC); 5. Releases, disbursements or expenditures of public works and social services and development. (Sec. 261 (v) OEC); 6. Appointment or use of special policemen, special/ confidential agents or the like. (Sec. 261 (m) OEC); 7. Use of armored land, water or aircraft. (Sec. 261 (r) OEC); 8. Wearing of uniforms and bearing of arms. (Sec. 261 (s) OEC).
January 18, 2006 (WED) to February 16, 2006 (THU)	CAMPAIGN PERIOD	
February 3, 2006 (FRI)	Submission to Comelec of complete list of all special policemen, special/ confidential agents or persons performing similar functions in the employ of barangay chairman, municipal mayor or any appointing authority. Last day for appointment of members of Plebiscite Committees	
February 13, 2006 (MON) to February 18, 2006 (SAT)	Posting of the Certified List of Voters as of October, 2005.	
February 17, 2006 (FRI)	Inspection of Polling Places	Liquor Ban (starting 12 Midnight) – Selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving, or taking intoxicating liquor, etc. (sec. 261 (dd), (1), OEC).
February 18, 2006 (SAT)	PLEBISCITE DAY	1. Cockfighting, and other forms of gambling, holding fairs, boxing and/or any other similar sports. (Sec. 261 (dd) OEC) 2. Giving, accepting free transportation, food, drinks, and things of value (Sec. 89, OEC). 3. Selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving, or taking intoxicating liquor, etc. (Sec. 261 (dd), (1), OEC). 4. Opening of booths or stalls for the sale of merchandise, refreshment, etc. within 30 meters radius from polling place (Sec. 261 (dd) (2) OEC).
February 20, 2006 (MON)	LAST DAY OF PLEBISCITE PERIOD	

Let this Resolution be published by the Education and Information Department (EID) in a newspaper of general circulation, and in a newspaper with local circulation in Tarlac City. The Deputy Executive Director for Operations shall furnish the Regional Election Director of Region III, the Provincial Election Supervisor of Tarlac, and the Election Officer of Tarlac City, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Secretary of the Department of Education, the Provincial Governor of Tarlac, the City Mayor of Tarlac City, the City Treasurer and the DepEd Superintendent of Tarlac City, with a copy of this Resolution.

The Election Officer of Tarlac City, shall give this Resolution the widest publication in the city.

This Resolution shall take effect upon its promulgation.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RUFINO S.B. JAVIER
Commissioner

MEHOL K. SADAIN
Commissioner

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON JR.
Commissioner

ROMEO A. BRAWNER
Commissioner

Republic of the Philippines

COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

Manila

RULES AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE CONDUCT OF THE FEBRUARY 18, 2006 PLEBISCITE TO RATIFY THE CONVERSION OF TARLAC CITY FROM A COMPONENT CITY TO A HIGHLY URBANIZED CITY.
x- -x

ABALOS, Benjamin S.	Chairman
JAVIER, Rufino SB	Commissioner
SADAIN, Mehol K.	Commissioner
BORRA, Resurreccion Z.	Commissioner
TUASON, Jr. Florentino A.	Commissioner
BRAWNER, Romeo A.	Commissioner

Promulgated: 22 December 2005

RESOLUTION NO. 7618

The Commission on Elections, by virtue of the powers conferred upon it by the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code, the Local Government Code of 1991, Republic Act No. 7166, and other election laws, **RESOLVED** to promulgate, as it hereby **RESOLVES** to promulgate, the following rules and regulations to govern the conduct of the February 18, 2006 plebiscite to ratify the conversion of Tarlac City from a component city to a highly urbanized city.

SEC. 1. Supervision and control. – The Commission on Elections shall have direct control and supervision over the conduct of the plebiscite.

SEC. 2. Expenses and election forms and paraphernalia. – The expenses in holding the plebiscite, which shall include the printing of official ballots, plebiscite returns and other forms; the procurement of supplies and paraphernalia; the per diems of the members of the Plebiscite Committees, the overtime compensation of the City Plebiscite Board of Canvassers, and their support staff; other operational and incidental expenses; and the costs of publication of resolutions and information materials, shall be borne by Tarlac City.

For this purpose, the Deputy Executive Director for Operations (ODEDO) shall require the City Election Officer of Tarlac City to prepare the budgetary requirements of its office, submit the budget for the holding of the plebiscite; and require the proponent to immediately appropriate and remit the necessary amount.

The Committees on Allocation, Printing, Reception and Verification, Packing and Shipping, Election and Barangay Affairs Department and Administrative Services Department shall prepare their itemized administrative, operational and technical budgetary needs, which shall be reviewed and consolidated by the ODEDO, and shall submit the same to the Commission *En Banc*, for approval.

SEC. 3. Posting of Presidential Proclamation No. 940. – At least ten (10) days prior to the day of the plebiscite, the EO of Tarlac City shall cause the posting of copies of Presidential Proclamation No 940, entitled: "CONVERTING THE CITY OF TARLAC FROM A COMPONENT CITY TO A HIGHLY URBANIZED CITY", in all the polling places of Tarlac City.

SEC. 4. Information campaign. – An objective information campaign shall be conducted in the whole of Tarlac City, to commence on January 18, 2006 up to February 16, 2006. During this period, civic, professional, religious, business, youth and any other similar organizations may hold symposia, public rallies or meetings to enlighten the voters of Tarlac City on the plebiscite issues, and to campaign for or against the ratification of Proclamation No. 940. Constructive discussions and debates shall be encouraged and the voters assured of the freedom to voice their opinion regarding the issues, advantages or disadvantages thereof.

The EO of Tarlac City, in coordination with the local government officials, mass media, NGOs and religious groups shall convene barangay assemblies *or "pulong-pulongs"* for such constructive discussions and debates.

SEC. 5. Date of plebiscite and voting hours. – The plebiscite shall be held on February 18, 2006 (Saturday). The voting shall start at seven o'clock in the morning and end at three o'clock in the afternoon.

SEC. 6. Area of coverage. – The plebiscite shall be held in the whole of Tarlac City.

SEC. 7. Who may vote. – All qualified voters of Tarlac City duly registered as of the May 10, 2004 Elections, including those whose applications for registration and/or transfer of registration records have been approved by the Election Registration Board of Tarlac City as of the last quarterly ERB hearing on October 17, 2005, are entitled to vote in the plebiscite.

The EO of Tarlac City shall prepare the lists of voters for use in the plebiscite in accordance with Section 12 hereof.

SEC. 8. Plebiscite Committee Composition, Compensation, Duties and Functions. – The voting and counting of voters shall be conducted in each polling place by a Plebiscite Committee (Committee) composed of a Chairman, a Poll Clerk and a Third Member who shall all be public school teachers, to be appointed by the Commission through the EO of Tarlac City.

Each member of the Committee shall be entitled to a per diem of Seven Hundred Pesos (P700.00) for services rendered on the day of the plebiscite.

The Committee shall have the following powers and duties:

(a) Supervise and conduct the voting in the polling place on February 18, 2006;
(b) Count the votes and thereafter prepare the plebiscite returns and other required documents/reports and distribute the same as herein provided;
(c) Furnish watchers certificate of votes upon request;
(d) Return the book/s of voters to the EO, through the principal of the polling centers, and deliver the other plebiscite paraphernalia to the respective custodians for safekeeping not later than February 20, 2006;
(e) Act as deputies of the Commission in the supervision and control of the plebiscite in the polling places wherein they are assigned to ensure the holding of free, orderly, honest, peaceful and credible plebiscite;
(f) Maintain order within the polling place and its premises, to keep access thereto, open and unobstructed, and to enforce obedience to its lawful orders.

If any person shall refuse to obey lawful orders of the Committee or shall conduct himself in a disorderly manner in its presence or within its hearing thereby interrupting or disturbing its proceedings, the Committee may issue an order in writing directing any peace officer to take such person into custody until the adjournment of the meeting, but such order shall not be executed as to prevent the person so taken into custody from exercising his right to vote. Such order shall be executed by any peace officer to whom it may be delivered, but if none is present, by any other person deputized by the Committee in writing; and

(g) Perform such other functions/duties as may be prescribed by the Commission.

SEC. 9. Disqualifications. – (a) No person shall serve as chairman or member of the Committee if he is related within the fourth civil degree of consanguinity or affinity to any member of the same Committee.

(b) No member of the Committee shall engage, directly or indirectly, in any partisan political activity or take part in the plebiscite, except to discharge his duties as such, and to vote provided he is a registered voter of Tarlac City.

SEC. 10. Precincts and polling places. – For purposes of the February 18, 2006 Plebiscite, the precincts established as of May 10, 2004 Elections shall be adopted, subject to the provisions of Section 11 hereof.

The location of polling places designated in the May 10, 2004 Elections shall be maintained, with such changes as the Commission may authorize, after notice and hearing to the interested parties in the political unit affected: **Provided**, that no location of polling place shall be changed within fifteen (15) days immediately preceding the day of the plebiscite except when it is destroyed or it cannot be used.

SEC. 11. Clustering of Precincts. – To obviate problems on insufficiency of Committees and polling places, the EO shall group (cluster) precincts in accordance with the following guidelines:

(a) The number of precincts in a group (cluster) shall not be more than three (3);
(b) The aggregate number of voters in a group shall not exceed four hundred (400);
(c) The precincts in a group shall belong to the same territory, same polling center and same barangay;
(d) The individual precinct numbers and list of voters of the precincts in a group shall be maintained separately. In no case shall they be combined; and
(e) The ballots for the precincts in a group shall be deposited in one ballot box and that one Plebiscite Committee shall be assigned for each group of precinct or precinct cluster.

SEC. 12. Precinct Level Computerized Voters List (PCVL). – The EO of Tarlac City shall print six (6) copies of PCVL which shall be certified by the Election Registration Board (ERB). The two (2) copies of the PCVL shall be given to the Committees for use on plebiscite day. The other four (4) copies of the PCVL shall be distributed as follows:

(a) One copy for posting at the Office of the Election Officer of Tarlac City;
(b) One copy for posting at the bulletin board of the City Hall of Tarlac City;
(c) One copy for the National Central File, Election Records and Statistics Department, Commission on Elections, Manila; and
(d) One copy for the Provincial File, Office of the Provincial Election Supervisor of Tarlac.

SEC. 13. Distribution of Plebiscite Forms and Supplies. – The City Treasurer shall, in coordination with the EO concerned, distribute the plebiscite forms and supplies to the Committees. The EO or his authorized representatives shall release the Books of Voters and the PCVL to the School Principal concerned who shall in turn release them to the Plebiscite Committees.

SEC. 14. Official ballots. – The official ballots shall be distributed at the ratio of one ballot per voter.

The official ballots to be used in the plebiscite shall bear the following heading "OFFICIAL BALLOT"; "PLEBISCITE"; "FEBRUARY 18, 2006"; "TARLAC CITY"; and underneath the following instructions: "Fill out this ballot secretly inside the booth. Do not put any distinctive mark on any part of this ballot."

The following question shall be provided in the official ballots:

"DO YOU APPROVE OF THE CONVERSION OF THE CITY OF TARLAC FROM A COMPONENT CITY TO A HIGHLY URBANIZED CITY PURSUANT TO PROCLAMATION NO. 940?" ☐

SEC. 15. Preliminaries to the Counting of Votes. – (a) The Committee shall clear the table of all unnecessary writing paraphernalia.

(b) The Committee shall open the ballot box, take out the ballots from the compartment for valid ballots and, without unfolding or exposing their contents, examine them using the following guidelines:

1. Ballots folded together – The Committee shall ascertain that each fold consists of a single ballot.

   If in the course of the examination, ballots are found folded together before they were deposited in the ballot box, they shall be placed in an envelope for excess ballots.

2. Excess ballots – The Committee shall count the ballots and compare the number of ballots with the number of voters who actually voted.

   If there are more ballots than the number of voters who actually voted, follow the procedures provided for in Sec. 16 hereof.

3. Ballots with detachable coupons – In case ballots with their detachable coupon are found in the box, the coupon shall be detached and deposited in the compartment for spoiled ballots, and the ballots shall be included in the pile of valid ballots.
4. Ballots with the word "spoiled" – If ballots with the word "spoiled" should be found, they shall be placed in the compartment for spoiled ballots.

   The ballots deposited in the compartment for spoiled ballots shall be presumed to be spoiled ballots, whether or not they contain such notation; but if the Committee should find that during the voting any valid ballots was erroneously deposited in this compartment, or if any ballot separated as excess or marked had been erroneously deposited therein, the Committee shall open said compartment after the voting and before the counting of votes for the sole purpose of drawing out the ballots erroneously deposited therein. It shall then prepare and sign a statement of such fact and lock the box with its three keys immediately thereafter. The valid ballots so withdrawn shall be mixed with the other valid ballots, and the excess or marked ballots shall be placed in their proper envelopes which shall for such purposes be opened and again labeled, sealed, signed and kept as hereinafter provided.

(c) Excess and spoiled ballots shall not be read in the counting of votes.
(d) The poll clerk shall take hold of the plebiscite returns and the third member shall tack the tally board on the blackboard or any available space within the plain view of the Committee, watchers and the public.

SEC. 16. Manner of Counting of votes. – The counting of votes shall be public without interruption or delay until completed and shall proceed as follows:

a. The committee shall open the ballot box, take out the ballots and without unfolding them or exposing their contents except so far as to ascertain that each ballot is single, compare the number of ballots in the box with the number of voters who actually voted as recorded in the Minutes of Voting and Counting.
b. If there are more ballots found than there are voters who actually voted, all the ballots shall be returned inside the box and thoroughly mixed therein. The Poll Clerk, without seeing the ballots and with his back to the box, shall publicly draw out as many ballots as may be equal to the excess, and without unfolding them, place them in an envelope which shall be marked as "excess ballots," sealed and signed by the Committee

   If there are no excess or the excess has been taken out, the Committee shall form separate piles of 100 ballots each which shall be held together by rubber band.

c. The Chairman shall take the ballots of the first pile and read the ballots one by one, while the Poll Clerk and Third Member shall simultaneously record on the plebiscite returns and tally board, respectively, each vote as it is read by the Chairman.

   Each vote shall be recorded by a vertical line, except every fifth vote, which shall be recorded by a diagonal line crossing the previous four vertical lines.

   After finishing the first pile, the Committee shall count the tallies for the Affirmative and Negative votes and record the sub-totals in the column immediately after the last tara recorded in the plebiscite returns and tally board, respectively.

   The Poll Clerk and the Third Member shall compare the tallies reflected in the plebiscite returns and tally board.

   In case of discrepancy, a recount shall be made. The ballots shall again be grouped together as before the reading.

d. Thereafter, the same procedures shall be followed with the second and subsequent piles of ballots.
e. After all the ballots for the precinct have been counted, the Committee shall:
   1. Sum up the sub-totals of recorded Affirmative and Negative Votes and enter the grand total in words and in figure in the plebiscite returns and tally board;
   2. See to it that the entries in the first copy of the plebiscite returns are clearly impressed and reflected properly in the other two (2) copies;
   3. Sign and affix their thumb marks on the certification portion printed at the bottom of the plebiscite returns and tally board; and
   4. Place the counted ballots in an envelope provided for the purpose, close the envelope with a serially numbered paper seal, sign and deposit the same in the compartment for valid ballots. The accomplished tally board, certified by the Committee, shall also be deposited in the compartment for valid ballots.

SEC. 17. Appreciation of Ballots. – The provisions of Sec. 211 of the Omnibus Election Code whenever applicable, shall govern the appreciation of ballots. Any question on the appreciation of ballots shall be decided by majority vote of the Committee

No watcher or any other person inside the polling place shall be allowed to participate in the appreciation of ballots. However, any watcher may file a protest, which shall be recorded in the Minutes

SEC. 18. Plebiscite Returns and Distribution of Copies Thereof. – Plebiscite returns shall be prepared in three (3) copies. All the members of the Committee shall sign the certification printed at the bottom of the plebiscite returns and affix their thumb marks on the space provided.

Upon completion of the plebiscite returns, each copy shall be placed in separate envelopes provided for the purpose, and the Committee shall immediately distribute the same under proper receipt, as follows:

(1) The first copy, to the City Plebiscite Board of Canvassers;
(2) The second copy, to the Election Records and Statistics Department of the Commission in Manila; and
(3) The third copy shall be deposited inside the ballot box.

SEC. 19. Announcement of Results. – Upon completion of the plebiscite returns, the Chairman of the Committee shall orally and publicly announce the total number of Affirmative and Negative Votes cast and counted in the precinct.

SEC 20. Alterations and Corrections of Plebiscite Returns. – Any correction or alteration made in the plebiscite returns by the Committee before the announcement of the results of the plebiscite in the polling place shall be duly initialed by all the members thereof.

After the announcement of the results of the plebiscite, the Committee shall not make any alteration or amendment in any of the copies of the returns, unless ordered by the Commission.

SEC. 21. Certificates of Votes. – Before leaving the precinct, the Committee shall issue a Certificate of Votes to the watchers upon the latter's request

SEC. 22. Delivery of the Ballot Boxes, and Other Supplies and Documents, Preservation of Voting Records, Ballot Boxes and their Keys, and their Disposition. – The provisions of Section 217, 218 and 219 of the Omnibus Election Code on delivery of ballot boxes, keys and election supplies and documents, preservation of the voting records and ballot boxes, and their keys and disposition of their contents shall apply to the plebiscite governed by this Resolution.

SEC. 23. Plebiscite Board of Canvassers. – There shall be one (1) City Plebiscite Board of Canvassers (CPBC) for Tarlac City which shall canvass the plebiscite returns submitted by the Committees. The CPBC shall be composed of the incumbent City Election Officer or a lawyer of the Commission, as Chairman; and as members, the City Prosecutor and the City Schools Division Superintendent thereat, subject to Sec. 27 hereof.

The CPBC may create such number of sub-canvassing committees to expedite the canvass of the plebiscite returns in the four hundred forty-one (441) clustered precincts. The members of the sub-canvassing committees shall be the same as the composition of the CPBC or their representative

At least five (5) days before the day of the plebiscite, the chairman shall issue a written notice to the other members of the CPBC that it shall convene at four o'clock in the afternoon of plebiscite day to canvass the plebiscite returns. Notice of said meeting shall be posted in conspicuous places in the City Hall and other public places in Tarlac City. The CPBC shall meet at the City Session Hall of Tarlac City not later than four o'clock in the afternoon of plebiscite day and shall immediately canvass the plebiscite returns and shall not adjourn until the canvass is completed.

SEC. 24. Supervision and Control over the City Plebiscite Board of Canvassers. - The Commission shall have direct control of and supervision over the CPBC and may *motu proprio* relieve at any time any member thereof for cause and may substitute him in accordance with Sec. 27 hereof.

SEC. 25. Absence of a Regular Member. – In case of absence of a regular member, the members present shall first verify whether or not the notice stating the date, time and place of canvassing has been duly served on the absent regular member.

In the absence of such notice, one shall be immediately sent to the absent member. If the latter cannot be located, or his whereabouts are unknown, he shall then be substituted. These facts shall be recorded in the respective minutes of the CPBC. As soon as the absent member appears, the substitute member shall relinquish his seat to the regular member.

SEC. 26. Incapacitated Regular Member. – In case of sickness or serious injury of the regular member, a sworn medical certificate shall be required attesting to the incapacity of said member. Upon submission of the medical certificate, a substitute shall be appointed. Said certificate shall be recorded in the Minutes of the CPBC.

SEC. 27. Substitution of Chairman and Members. – In case of non-availability, absence, disqualification due to relationship, or incapacity for any cause of the chairman, the Commission shall appoint a lawyer of the Commission as substitute. With respect to the other members of the CPBC, the Commission shall appoint as substitute the following in the order named: City Administrator, the City Assessor, the Clerk of Court nominated by the Executive Judge of the City Trial Court, and other available appointive City official.

SEC. 28. Prohibition Against Leaving Official Station. – During the period beginning February 18, 2006 until the completion of the canvass, no member or substitute member of the CPBC shall be transferred, assigned or detailed outside of his official station nor shall he leave his station without prior authority of the Commission.

SEC. 29. Quorum. – A majority of the members of the CPBC shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. A majority vote of all the members thereof shall be necessary to render a decision.

SEC. 30. Watchers: Rights and Duties. – The proponents and oppositions, registered political parties or coalition of political parties, the citizen's arm of the Commission, if any, and other accredited groups or organizations may appoint watchers during the voting, counting and canvassing. A person who is not a registered voter of the City, of questionable reputation, or who has been convicted of an election offense or any other crime shall not be appointed as watcher. Barangay officials, including barangay tanods, are disqualified to serve as watchers.

The watchers shall have the right to:

(a) be present at, and take note of all the proceedings;
(b) read the plebiscite returns without touching them; and
(c) file a protest against any irregularity noted in the plebiscite return or in the proceedings of the CPBC and obtain the resolution thereon in writing.

The watcher shall not be allowed to participate in the deliberation of the CPBC.

SEC. 31. Right to be Present and to Counsel. – Proponents or oppositors have the right to be present and to counsel during the canvass of the returns. Only one counsel shall argue for the proponent or oppositor. In case there are several counsel for the proponents or oppositors, they shall agree among themselves who will argue for them.

SEC. 32 Internal Canvassing Procedures. The CPBC shall meet promptly at 4 o'clock in the afternoon of plebiscite day and canvass the votes in the following manner:

a. The Chairman of the CPBC shall list sequentially all precincts in the Statement of Votes (SOVs) by precinct and ensure that every precinct in the project of precincts is listed therein. The CPBC Chairman shall produce before the members, the ballot boxes containing plebiscite returns;
b. Before opening a ballot box, the CPBC shall record the conditions and serial numbers of the ballot boxes and the self-locking serially numbered fixed length seals;
c. The Chairman of the CPBC shall then open the ballot box, retrieve the envelopes containing plebiscite returns and record in its Minutes of Canvass, the condition and serial number of the envelopes and their paper seals;
d. The Chairman of the CPBC shall open the envelope one at a time, record the condition and serial number of the returns and its paper seal, and forthwith open the same for canvassing.

   Only such number of envelopes containing plebiscite returns that can be canvassed during the meeting of the board shall be opened which number shall be recorded in the Minutes of Canvass.

   Entries in the SOV by Precinct shall be made every time a plebiscite return is canvassed. Once all the columns of the SOV are filled up, the members of the CPBC shall sum up the number of precincts canvassed, the number of registered voters, the number of voters who actually voted, and the total Affirmative and Negative votes therein, and thereafter affix their initials below their names appearing at the certification portion of the form;

e. In case its copy of a plebiscite returns is missing, the CPBC shall, obtain such missing returns from the Plebiscite Committee concerned. If said returns have been lost or destroyed, the CPBC, upon prior authority of the Commission may use any of the authentic copies of said returns or a certified copy thereof issued by the Commission. Forthwith, the PBC shall refer the case for investigation to the Regional Election Director (RED) concerned who shall report his findings to the Commission; and
f. Each time the CPBC suspends its meetings or adjourns for the purpose of awaiting for the other plebiscite returns, it shall:
   1. Determine the totals of all Affirmative and Negative votes canvassed;
   2. Accomplish the SOV by precinct and close the same with the initials of the members following the last entry of Affirmative and Negative votes;
   3. Place the SOV in an envelope, which shall be sealed with a serially numbered paper seal and signed by the members in the presence of all the members of the board and the watchers; and
   4. Place the plebiscite returns already canvassed, the remaining unopened envelopes, and envelope containing a copy of the SOV inside a ballot box which shall be locked with three padlocks and a self-locking metal seal, the serial number of which shall be duly recorded in the Minutes of Canvass.

      Each member of the CPBC shall keep a key to the three padlocks of a ballot box, so that it cannot be opened without all of them being present. The ballot box shall be deposited in a secured room for safekeeping until the resumption of its meeting

   5. At the resumption of the canvass, the secretary of the CPBC shall:
      a. Get the ballot box from the secured room and verify the condition of the ballot box, the three padlocks and the self-locking serially numbered fixed length seal,
      b. Enter in the Minutes a description of the condition thereof, as well as the serial number of the self-locking serially numbered fixed length seals;
      c. Destroy the self-locking serially numbered fixed length seals in the presence of the other members of the board and watchers; and
      d. Present to the CPBC the remaining unopened envelopes containing plebiscite returns and the official SOV contained in a duly sealed and signed envelope.
   6. After all the plebiscite returns assigned to it have been canvassed, the CPBC concerned shall:
      a. Prepare a tally of the total affirmative and negative votes including the data on the number of registered voters, number of voters who actually voted, and the total number of precincts it has canvassed. Such tally should be publicly accessible to ensure transparency; and
      b. Place the plebiscite returns copy for the PBC in their respective envelopes and deposit the same inside the ballot box which shall be locked with three padlocks and sealed with a self-locking metal seal.
   7. Each member of the CPBC shall keep a key corresponding to the three padlocks of the ballot box.

SEC. 33. Minutes of the Canvass of the CPBC. - The CPBC shall prepare three (3) copies of the Minutes of the Canvass.

The first copy shall be submitted by the Secretary of the CPBC to the Law Department of the Commission within ten (10) days from termination of canvass. The second copy shall be deposited inside the ballot box. The third copy shall be forwarded to the Office of the Deputy Executive Director for Operations.

SEC. 34. Completion of the Canvass. – The CPBC shall sign the certification and affix their thumbmarks at the bottom of each SOV, and, using a separate SOV, consolidate the data including the total Affirmative and Negative votes. Thereafter, it shall prepare a Certificate of Canvass and Proclamation (COCP) which shall contain the following data:

1. number of precincts canvassed;
2. number of registered voters;
3. number of voters who actually voted;
4. number of affirmative/negative votes; and
5. whether or not the affirmative/negative votes constitute majority of the votes cast in the Barangay concerned.

The COCP shall be supported by an SOV by precinct. The members of the CPBC shall print their full names and affix their signatures and thumbmarks in the proper space at the bottom of both forms and certify under oath that the entries therein are true and correct.

SEC. 35. Distribution of the COCP. - The COCP shall be prepared in four (4) copies supported by a Statement of Votes per Precinct, and distributed as follows:

(1) The original shall, within three (3) days from proclamation, be sent to the Election Records and Statistics Department of the Commission;
(2) The second copy shall be filed in the Office of the Election Officer;
(3) The third copy shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government; and
(4) The fourth copy shall be submitted to the City Mayor of Tarlac City.

SEC. 36. Applicability of the Omnibus Election Code and Other Election Laws. - The pertinent provisions of the Omnibus Election Code, Republic Act No. 7160 and other election laws and resolutions of the Commission which are not inconsistent herewith shall, as far as practicable, apply to the plebiscite subject of this Resolution.

SEC. 37. Implementation. – The Office of the Deputy Executive Director for Operations, assisted by Election and Barangay Affairs Department, Finance Services Department, and Administrative Services Department, shall implement this Resolution to ensure the holding of a free, orderly, honest, peaceful and credible plebiscite.

The Deputy Executive Director for Operations assisted by the Regional Election Director of Region III and Provincial Election Supervisor of Tarlac shall supervise the conduct of the plebiscite.

SEC. 38. Dissemination. – The Education and Information Department shall cause the immediate publication of this Resolution in one (1) daily newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines and one (1) local newspaper and give it the widest publication and dissemination possible.

Let this Resolution be published by the Education and Information Department (EID) in a newspaper of general circulation, and in a newspaper with local circulation in the City of Tarlac. The Deputy Executive Director for Operations shall furnish the Regional Election Director of Region III, the Provincial Election Supervisor of Tarlac, and the Election Officer of Tarlac City, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Secretary of the Department of Education, the City Mayor of Tarlac City, the City Treasurer and the DepEd Superintendent of Tarlac City, with a copy of this Resolution.

The EO of Tarlac City shall give this Resolution the widest publication in Tarlac City.

SEC. 39. Effectivity. – This Resolution shall take effect upon its publication.

SO ORDERED.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RUFINO S.B. JAVIER
Commissioner

MEHOL K. SADAIN
Commissioner

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON JR.
Commissioner

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Commissioner

(POI–Jan 4 2006)

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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICES

Republic of the Philippines
ZAMBOANGA CITY SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY
San Ramon, Zamboanga City

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

ROAD OPENING AT THE ZAMBOECOZONE 2nd INDUSTRIAL PARK (SEAFRONT - PHASE I)

1 The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA), through the Corporate Operating Budget 2005 intends to apply the sum of **EIGHT MILLION SEVENTY-SIX THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED NINETY-SEVEN PESOS & 95/100 ONLY (P8,076,697.95)** being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for **"Road Opening at the ZAMBOECOZONE 2nd Industrial Park (Seafront-Phase I)"**. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

2. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authroity (ZCSEZA) now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential Bidders to apply for eligibility for the **"Road Opening at the ZAMBOECOZONE 2nd Industrial Park (Seafront-Phase I)"**. Bidders should possess a valid PCAB license applicable to the above type and cost of the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC, and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents. Interested Bidders must submit their LOIs and secure the Eligibility Documents upon payment of a nonrefundable fee **of Two Hundred Pesos (P 200.00) on January 12 - 17, 2006 from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the BAC Secretariat, 2nd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building.** Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day for the submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents shall be on the date of the opening of Eligibility Documents **on January 25, 2006 at 10:00 AM at the Audio Visual Room, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City.** Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Documents.

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted, unless otherwise stated to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, only Bids from eligible Bidders will be opened. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184 a contract will only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.

4. Interested Bidders shall submit their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the **BAC Secretariat, 2nd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building** on or before January 25, 2006

5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check upon the presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **Two Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (P2,500.00).** The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative on **January 26 - February 10, 2006** during office hours.

6. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA) will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on **January 30, 2006 at 10:00 AM at the Audio Visual Room, 3rd Floor ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City.**

7. Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before **Februnry 10, 2006 at 10:00 AM.**

All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the following form:

Form of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
Cash, Certified Check, Cashiers' Check, or Manager's Check	One Percent (1%)
GSIS Surety Bond	Two and a half Percent (2 ½ %)

Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be on **February 10, 2006 at 10:00 AM at the Audio Visual Room, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City.** Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below on **February 10, 2006 at 10:00 AM.**

8. Completion of the Works is required by 120 calendar days.

9. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA) reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) **GEORGINA PANTALEON-YU**
Chairman and Administrator
Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority
Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City
(062) 992-0409, (062) 993-0209
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PDI- Dec 29 2005 Jan 4 & 11 2006

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Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late ANTONIO Ro. HERRERA has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs before Notary Public BEBENE G. CARRERA of Quezon City as per Doc#150, Page#31, Book# I Series of 2005.
(PDI- Dec. 21, 28 & Jan. 04, 2005)

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Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte

Contract Reference Number
Name of the Contract
Location of the Contract

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Government of the Philippines through the Department of Land Reform (DLR) has received a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) toward the cost of Agrarian Reform Communities Project (ARCP). It is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan will be applied to eligible payments under the contracts of Rural Infrastructure Component for which this Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid is issued.

The Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) as Medium "A" or higher for similar contract to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract:

Name of Contract: Improvement San Vicente-Butadon-Sta. Cruz-GMA Loop FMR
Location: SBS ARC, Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte
Brief Description: Concreting of 5.100 kms. Farm to Market Road
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC): Php 42,319,349.19
Contract Duration: 154 Calendar Days

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment (listed in the Eligibility Forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC Activities	*Schedule*
1. Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	January 17, 2006 - January 24, 2006
2. Issuance of Eligibility Forms	January 17, 2006 - January 24, 2006
3. Deadline of Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	January 24, 2006
4. Notice of Results of Eligibility Check	January 30, 2006
5. Issuance of Bid Documents	January 30, 2006 - February 10, 2006
6. Pre-bid Conference	February 17, 2006, 9:00 AM
7. Receipt and Opening of Bids	March 1, 2006 not later than 10.00 AM

Minimum Required Equipment:

No. of Units	*Description*
1	Concrete Paver
1	Concrete Batching Plant
1	Water Truck
2	Road Grader
1	Bulldozer D83
1	Concrete Saw
2	Payloader
1	Concrete Vibrator
10	Dumptruck 10 wheelers
1	Chain Saw
1	Backhoe EX 100
2	Road Roller Vibratory

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at Office of the BAC Secretariat, Gov. Arsenio A. Quibranza Provincial Government Center, Pigcarangan, Tubod, Lanao del Norte, upon their submission of a LOI, and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of Seven Hundred Fifty Pesos only (P750.00) to the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte's Cashier. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the results of the Eligibity Check by the BAC at the same address.

All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the following forms:

1. Cash/certified check/cashier's check/manager's check in the amount of one percent (1%) of ABC which is P423,193.48;
2. Surety Bond which is two and a half percent (2.5%) of ABC in the amount of P1,057,983.70 callable on demand and issued by the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) or by a reputable surety or insurance company and to be posted in favor of the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for the bidding upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Fifteen Thousand Pesos only (P15,000.00) to the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte's Cashier.

The Province of Lanao del Norte reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, and waive any informality or technicality, and to award to any bidder whose proposal is deemed most advantageous to the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte. The Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte neither assumes any obligation for any loss whatsoever that may be incurred by the bidder on the preparation of their respective bids nor does the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte guarantee that an award will be made.

Approved by

(Sgd.) MILDRED J. HINGCO
BAC Chairman

(PDI - Jan. 4 & 11, 2006)

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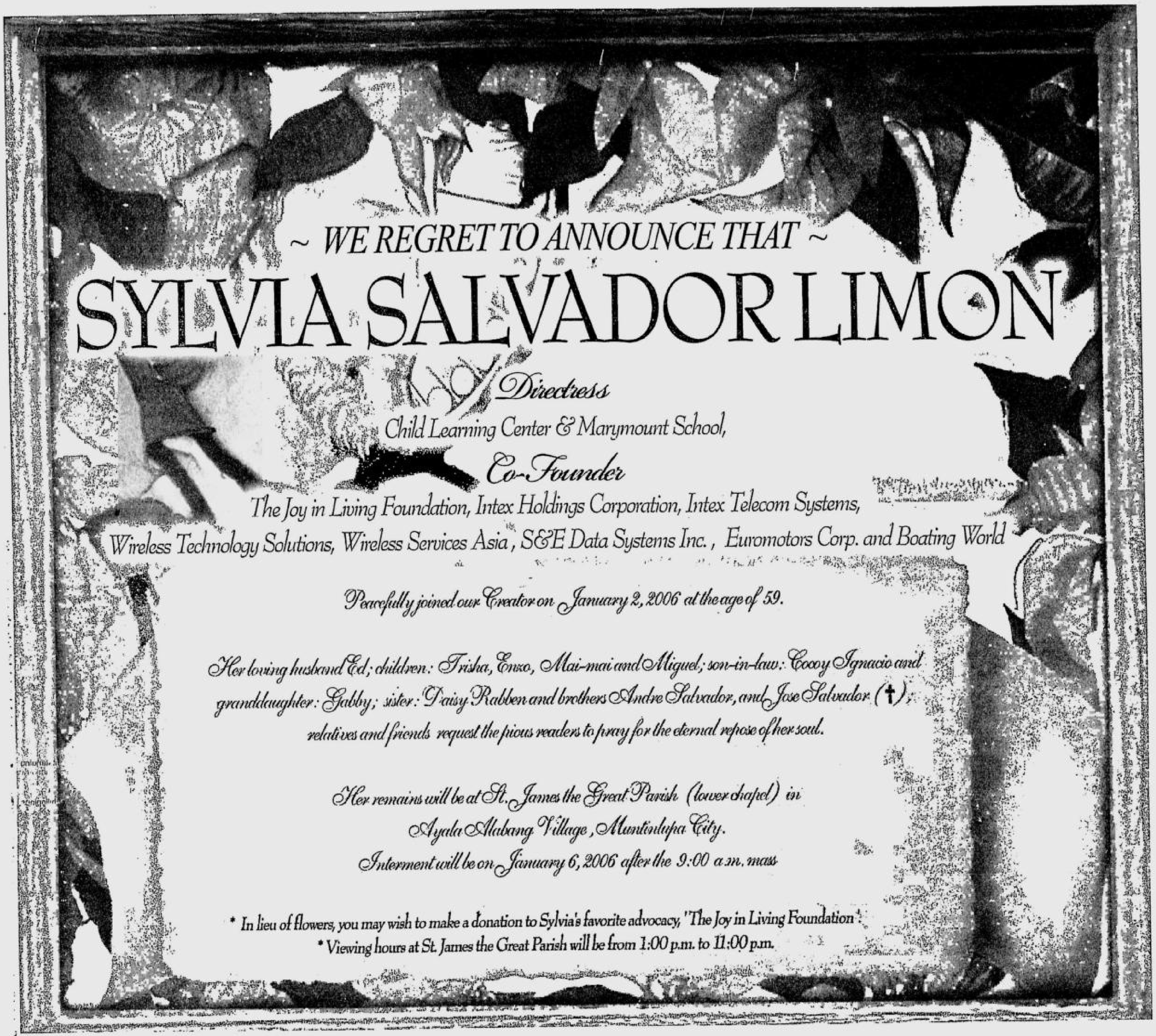

~ WE REGRET TO ANNOUNCE THAT ~

SYLVIA SALVADOR LIMON

Directress
Child Learning Center & Marymount School,
Co-Founder
The Joy in Living Foundation, Intex Holdings Corporation, Intex Telecom Systems, Wireless Technology Solutions, Wireless Services Asia , S&E Data Systems Inc. , Euromotors Corp. and Boating World

Peacefully joined our Creator on January 2, 2006 at the age of 59.

Her loving husband Ed; children: Trisha, Enzo, Mai-mai and Miguel; son-in-law: Cocoy Ignacio and granddaughter: Gabby; sister: Daisy Rabben and brothers Andre Salvador, and Jose Salvador (†); relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains will be at St. James the Great Parish (lower chapel) in
Ayala Alabang Village , Muntinlupa City.
Interment will be on January 6, 2006 after the 9:00 a.m. mass

* In lieu of flowers, you may wish to make a donation to Sylvia's favorite advocacy, 'The Joy in Living Foundation'.
* Viewing hours at St. James the Great Parish will be from 1:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

FRANCISCO B. DELA CRUZ

Peacefully joined our Lord on
January 1, 2006 at the age of 75.

His wife **Geny**; children **Joy & Bernard, Rodolfo & Lissa, Donna & Ed**; and grandchildren **Byron, Bea, Kaye, Dino, Irish, Becca, Diego, Gab & Reign**, relatives & friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the Dela Cruz's Residence at #59 Palawan St., Bago-Bantay, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Sunday, January 8, at the Holy Cross Memorial Park, Quezon City.

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

ALBERTO ENCINARES HEQUIBAL

who passed away in the Grace of the Lord
on December 24, 2005

wish to convey our heartfelt gratitude to all those who helped us, grieved with us with their presence, prayers, messages of sympathy, kept vigil and who in countless ways comforted us in our bereavement.

Our Most Sincere Gratitude

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

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OBITUARIES

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."

— 2 Corinthians 5:8

"Only goodness and love will pursue me all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come..." **Psalm 23:6**

DIADORO F. EVANGELISTA

"Dody"

Peacefully joined his Creator and wife, ***Charito***
on January 3, 2006 at the age of 89.

His children **Ronnie** and **Thelma, Jody, Bobby** and **Felicia, Rowie;** grandchildren **Rachel, Rhoanne, Raymond** (†), **Michael, Boobee, Mark, Samara, Billy, Patricia;** great grandchild **Ysabella** request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Ave., Quezon City and will be transferred to the Sta. Rita Parish Church, Quezon City on January 4, 2006 at 12:00 noon.

Cremation will be on January 7, 2006 at La Funeraria Paz after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at Sta. Rita Parish Church, Q.C.

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BENIGNO DE SALES, SR.

Died peacefully on January 1, 2006
at the age of 71.

His loving wife **Elizabeth**; children **Bing, Duday, Juboy, Marco, Gracita, Bebeth Joy** and **Lavinia**; grandchildren and other relatives request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, Quezon City and will be transferred to Pulupandan, Negros Occidental on January 6, 2006.

Interment will be on Monday, January 9, 2006 at Pulupandan Cemetery.

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest. **Matthew 11:28**

Our Beloved Daddy

Edilberto "Agi" Ponce Diaz

passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on January 3, 2006 at the age of 73.

He is survived by his wife **Tess**; children and children-in-law **Vojie, Jojo** & **Jing, Tess** & **Denis, Edison** and **Eddie Boy**; grandchildren, brothers and sisters, in-laws, nephews and nieces.

His family will receive relatives and friends at the La Funeraria Paz-Sucat, Parañaque City until Thursday morning, January 5, 2006. He will then be brought home to his beloved Pagsanjan, Laguna.

Interment will be on Friday afternoon,
January 6, 2006 at the Ala-Ala Memorial Park
in Pagsanjan, Laguna.

CLASSIFIEDS

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PAWING, PALO, LEYTE
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Fax No. 053-323-3061

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR REGISTRATION/ELIGIBILITY & TO BID

PROCUREMENT OF SECURITY SERVICES FOR NFA REGION VIII

The National Food Authority (NFA) invites all Interested Private Security Agencies to register, apply for eligibility and to bid for provision of Security Services for Calendar Year 2006 at NFA Regional Office No. VIII. The service contract to be bid shall be divided into lots with one province treated as one (1) Lot, to wit:

LOT NO.	PROVINCE	NO. OF SG'S	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
1	NORTHERN LEYTE	24	P 3,068,640.00
2	SOUTHERN LEYTE	10	1,278,600.00
3	BILIRAN	4	511,440.00
4	WESTERN SAMAR	9	1,150,740.00
5	NORTHERN SAMAR	19	2,429,340.00
6	EASTERN SAMAR	12	1,534,320.00
	TOTAL	78	P 9,973,080.00

The application forms, eligibility requirements and other bid documents shall be obtained from the Regional Bids and Award Committee (RBAC) Secretariat after payment of a non-transferable/non-refundable bidding fee of Seven Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (P7,500.00). The schedule of bidding activities are as follows:

Date	Activity
Jan. 5-16, 2006 (8:00 am – 5:00 pm)	Issuance of Registration, Eligibility and Bid Documents (NFA-ROVIII)
Jan. 19, 2006 (5:00 pm)	Deadline for Submission of Required Registration & Eligibility Documents
Jan. 25, 2006 (8:00 am – 5:00 pm)	Issuance of Certificate of Registration & Notice of Eligibility
Jan. 26, 2006 (2:00 pm)	Pre-Bidding Conference (NFA-RO8 Conf. Rm)
Feb. 7, 2006 (9:30 am)	Submission & Opening of Bids (NFA-RO8 Conference Rm)

A Special Power of Attorney (SPA) issued by the Prospective Bidder Owner (for sole ownership) and/or resolution from the Board authorizing their representative (for Corporations) to purchase the bid documents, to sign for and behalf of the owner/corporation whatever documents relative to the bidding and to attend the pre-bidding conference and during the opening of the bids shall be required.

NFA reserves the right to reject any or all bids to waive any formality/informality of the bids, received and to accept only such Bids which are advantageous to the National Food Authority.

(Sgd.) **ANTONIO J. ADORABLE**
Asst. Regional Manager II/
Chairman-RBAC, NFA-ROVIII

(PDI–Dec. 29, 2005 & Jan. 4, 2006)

PRIVATIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OFFICE

INVITATION TO SUBMIT OFFERS

Offered for Sale are seven residential lots formerly belonging to the Peninsula Development Bank (Penbank), whereby six lots are located at Peninsula Homes, Subdivision, Barangay Bukal, Pagbilao, Quezon; and one lot is located at San Vicente, Gumaca, Quezon.

These seven residential lots are being offered on a per site and on an "as-is, where-is" basis, as follows:

Peninsula Homes Subdivision, Barangay Bukal, Pagbilao, Quezon

SITE NO.	TCT NO.	LOT NO.	AREA (sq.m.)	INDICATIVE PRICE
1	T-390084	Lot-8	120	54,000
2	T-390103	Lot-6, Blk. 6	230	150,000
3	T-390089	Lot-7, Blk. 6	204	133,000
4	T-390051	Lot-6	89	67,000
5	T-390061	Lot-12, Blk. 6	227	148,000
6	T-390078	Lot-1	117	47,000

San Vicente, Gumaca, Quezon

SITE NO.	TCT NO.	LOT NO.	AREA (sq.m.)	INDICATIVE PRICE
7*	T-411949	Lot-9239	348	49,000

*With informal dwellers

Offers will be received, opened and tabulated in the presence of offerors on 17 January 2006, 6th Floor, PMO Conference Room, NDMC Building, 104 Gamboa Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City.

Interested parties may request for the duly authenticated copies of the Offer for Sale documents for a nominal fee of P300.00 from the PMO Marketing Office, 104 Gamboa Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City.

For more information, please call Mr. John DF. Baldemor of the PMO Marketing Department at 817-6331 or 817-8762.

(PDI--Jan. 3, 4 & 5, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
11th Judicial Region
BRANCH 10
Davao City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR CORPORATE REHABILITATION OF

SP. PROC. NO. 8406-05

J. S. GAISANO, INC.,
Petitioner
x-----------------------------------x

STAY ORDER

By this **PETITION, J. S. Gaisano Inc.**, a domestic corporation duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the Philippines, with principal offices at 76 cor. Suazo and Sta. Ana Streets, Davao City, seeks the approval of its Rehabilitation Plan attached to the petition as Annex "F".

Petitioner alleged that is was primarily established to engage in the business of retail merchandising and was, until 1992, the leading mall operator in Davao City, employing more then 2,000 employees and workers. If further alleged that after its incorporation in 1976 its established other stores so that in 1988 established in Tagum, Davao del Norte the JS Gaisano which at that time was the most advanced supermarket and department store in the locality. It varied its services from merchandising to food and was in the midst of further expansion when it was hit by fire in 1994, which gutted its store and food centers. It has accordingly achieved the reputation of being a merchandising expert and was awarded "The Most Outstanding Countryside Investor of the Year" by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry. However, because of the upsurge of interest rate resulting from the Asian financial crisis in 1997 it experience financial problems from bank creditors. To solve this, it sold its main mall at V. Ilustre St., Davao City to pay its creditors leaving the Development Bank of the Philippines as its lone bank creditor, holding seven valuable properties in Matina totaling 17 hectares.

Petitioner admits that it has adequate assets to jumpstart its business in another form. It has still its Matina properties which allegedly the Sta. Lucia Development Corporation has expressed its willingness to lend its properties, credits, expertise and personnel to develop the same in into a mixed residential and commercial subdivision. Hence, petitioner prays for the issuance of an order to stay all claims against it in the meantime that the rehabilitation plan is under consideration.

Finding the petition to be sufficient in form and substance, Mr. Jesus Jaime C. Lantin, of 0101 Basilan corner Davao Sts., Insular Village II, Lanang, Davao City, Philippines petitioner's nominee is hereby appointed rehabilitation receiver in accordance with the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation, which took effect on December 15, 2000. Mr. Jesus Jaime C. Lantin is required to post a bond hereby fixed at ONE MILLION (P1,000,000.00) PESOS in favor of J. S. Gaisano, Inc. to guarantee the faithful performance of his functions as receiver. He is directed to signify his acceptance or non-acceptance of this appointment within then (10) days from receipt of this order.

The enforcement of all claims, whether for money or otherwise and whether by court action or otherwise, against the petitioner, its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with the debtor is hereby STAYED.

The petitioner is hereby prohibited from selling, encumbering, transferring or disposing, in any manner, of its properties except in the ordinary course of business.

It is prohibited from making any payment of its liabilities outstanding as of the date of filing of the petition.

The suppliers of goods and services of the petitioner are prohibited from withholding supplies thereof in the ordinary course of business as long as the latter pays for services and goods supplied after the issuance of this stay order.

The petitioner is hereby directed to pay in full all administrative, liabilities to be incurred after the issuance of this STAY ORDER.

The initial hearing of this petition is hereby set on January 25, 2006, at 8:30 in the morning. The petitioner is directed to cause the publication of this Order in the Philippine Daily Inquirer once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks starting not later than seven (7) days from the issuance of this order.

All creditors and all other interested parties including the Securities and Exchange Commission are hereby directed to file and serve on the petitioner and upon this Court a verified comment on or opposition to the petition, with supporting affidavits and documents, not later than ten (10) days before the date of the initial hearing and putting them on notice that their failure to do so will bar them from participating in the proceedings.

The creditors and interested parties are hereby directed to secure from the Court copies of the petition and its annexes within such time as to enable themselves to file their comment and/or opposition to the petition and to prepare for the initial hearing on January 25, 2006, otherwise they will be barred from participating in the proceedings of this case.

The petitioner is hereby directed to immediately serve a copy of this Order and the Petition with Annexes on Mr. Jesus Jaime C. Lantin, who is requested to manifest his acceptance or non-acceptance of his appointment not later than ten (10) days from receipt of this Order.

SO ORDERED.

Given this 28th day of December 2005, at Davao City, Philippines

(Sgd.) **JAIME V. QUITAIN**
Judge

Copy furnished:

Atty. Marcial O. T. Balgos
1009 West Tektite Tower, PSEC Bldg.
Exchange Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City

Mr. Jesus Jaime C. Lantin
0101 Basilan Corner Davao Sts.
Insular Village II, Lanang
Davao City

Securities and Exchange Commission
Juna Subdivision, Matina
Davao City

The Acting Clerk of Court
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(PDI - Jan. 4 & 11, 2006)

UPGRADE 2006: The 17th UP Diliman Job Fair

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Organized by the UP Office of Counseling and Guidance (UP OCG) with the UP Junior Philippine Institute of Accountants (UP JPIA) and the UP Alumni Association (UP AA), UPGRADE 2006 is an event designed to bring your company closer to the country's finest graduating students from All Courses. The event will push through on 23-27 January 2006, from 8am–5pm at the Ang Bahay ng Alumni, UP Campus, Diliman, Quezon City.

The organizers will gladly welcome any inquiries regarding this event through the following: Telefax No. 926.4162; Tel. No. 929.5835; or e-mail upjobfair2006@yahoo.com. You may also reach us through any of the following: (Jill) 0917.8158540, (Maila) 0919.5608386, (Pete) 0915.4082972, (Kristy) 0916.2034170, (Crystle) 0917.8584532.

NFA assures of sufficient stock of rice until the middle of '06

A STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF RICE STOCKS BY the National Food Authority along with the inroads made by the Agriculture Department in increasing the production of other food commodities assure the ample supply of the country's basic food needs next year. Practically debunking fears of a rice shortage next year, NFA administrator Gregorio Y. Tan, Jr. said that based on the agency's operational distribution target, NFA's rice stocks will last until June next year. At 478,600 metric tons, the agency's rice stock accounts for 29 percent of the country's total current stock of 1.6 million metric tons (MMT). Household and commercial rice stocks, placed at 790,000 mt and 361,500 MT, respectively, account for the balance. The country is also banking on the increase in palay production. According to Tan, a relatively high sufficiency level in rice requirement in 2004 can be duplicated this year through sustained planting of the regular certified rice and the expansion of area planted to hybrid rice. As there was no major weather disturbance occuring lately, the country has a fair chance of achieving good harvest for the main crop from October to early next year. For additional information, queries and complaints on rice supply the public is advised to contact NFA through Text NFA at mobile number 0917-6210927.

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Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – Dec 28, 2005 & Jan. 4, 2006)

Napocor to certify workers

By Abigail L. Ho

IN PREPARATION FOR ITS EVENTUAL PRIVATIZATION, the state-run National Power Corp. has begun offering a certification program that will equip its employees with more-than-sufficient skills in operating power plants.

The certificates to be issued under the program—an initiative of the state firm's training and development department—are meant to provide "concrete proof" that Napocor employees are qualified to operate the state firm's generation facilities.

"[Napocor employees] can then present their certificates to the future owners of our power plants," said Reynaldo Bongao, Napocor technical training division manager.

Already, 14 Napocor operations and maintenance personnel under the state firm's Small Power Utilities Group (Spug) have received their certificates for completing the program.

Before taking the certification exam, the participants are required to attend a stand-up, classroom-type training for the operation of a Dale-Perkins generating set.

They will then take written examinations according to their respective positions in the Napocor-Spug organization.

After that, they will be interviewed individually to assess and review the validity of the test instruments used. The participants will also be given the chance to ask questions and seek clarifications.

Six assessors from the Napocor-Spug Luzon operations will also test the participants and evaluate their skills in starting up and shutting down a Dale-Perkins generating set, based on Start-up and Shutdown Procedures.

"With the certification, our plant personnel will have concrete proof that they are really qualified to operate our generation facilities," Bongao said.

Napocor, through the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp., is currently going through a process of privatization.

So far, Psalm has been able to sell five Napocor hydropower plants and one coal-fired facility.

These are the 3.5-megawatt (MW) Talomo, 1.6-MW Agusan, 1.8-MW Barit, 0.4-MW Cawayan and 1.2-MW Loboc hydropower facilities, and the 600-MW Masinloc coal-fired power plant.

DA sees weak growth in '05 farm output

By Christine A. Gaylican

A PROLONGED 2005 DRY SPELL LIKELY trimmed growth in the country's farm sector to about 2.5 percent, Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban yesterday said.

The preliminary figure fell below the adjusted 2005 full-year government growth target of 3.2 percent.

Also, the expected growth in farm output is considerably lower than the 5 percent posted in 2004.

Agriculture accounts for about a fifth of the country's economic output.

"It would be safe to say that total output of this major economic sector for the entire year could end up only slightly better than two percent, assuming that the production performance in the fourth quarter (was) much better than in the first nine months," Panganiban said.

According to Romeo Recide, director of the DA's Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS), some 600,000 metric tons of rice and corn crops were lost in the drought and flooding that occurred in the Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon and Southern Luzon regions.

The drought in the first half of the year had had badly hit vital crops. Output actually declined by 0.32 percent during the first three quarters, said the BAS in its report.

Heavily hit by the dry spell were palay, corn and sugarcane. Palay output fell 2.34 percent, while corn harvests dropped 2.31 percent.

Sugarcane fell 14.81 percent.

Fortunately, coconut producers maintained steady growth at 3.74 percent. Other cash crops, such as mango and coffee, improved outputs by 4.95 percent and 2.07 percent, respectively.

The limited government budget and the high cost of farm inputs had affected the agriculture sector's growth in 2005, according to Dr. Rolando Dy, executive director of UAP's Center for Food and Agri Business.

"The agriculture sector's growth is still better than the average growth rate of 2.6 percent attained in the years 1994 to 2003," Dy noted. "But there would be a slowdown compared to the growth attained in 2004."

Panganiban said measures were being undertaken to increase the sector's growth to "not less than four percent" in 2006.

This would include better timing in the release of agricultural funds and more government spending. *With a report from AFP*

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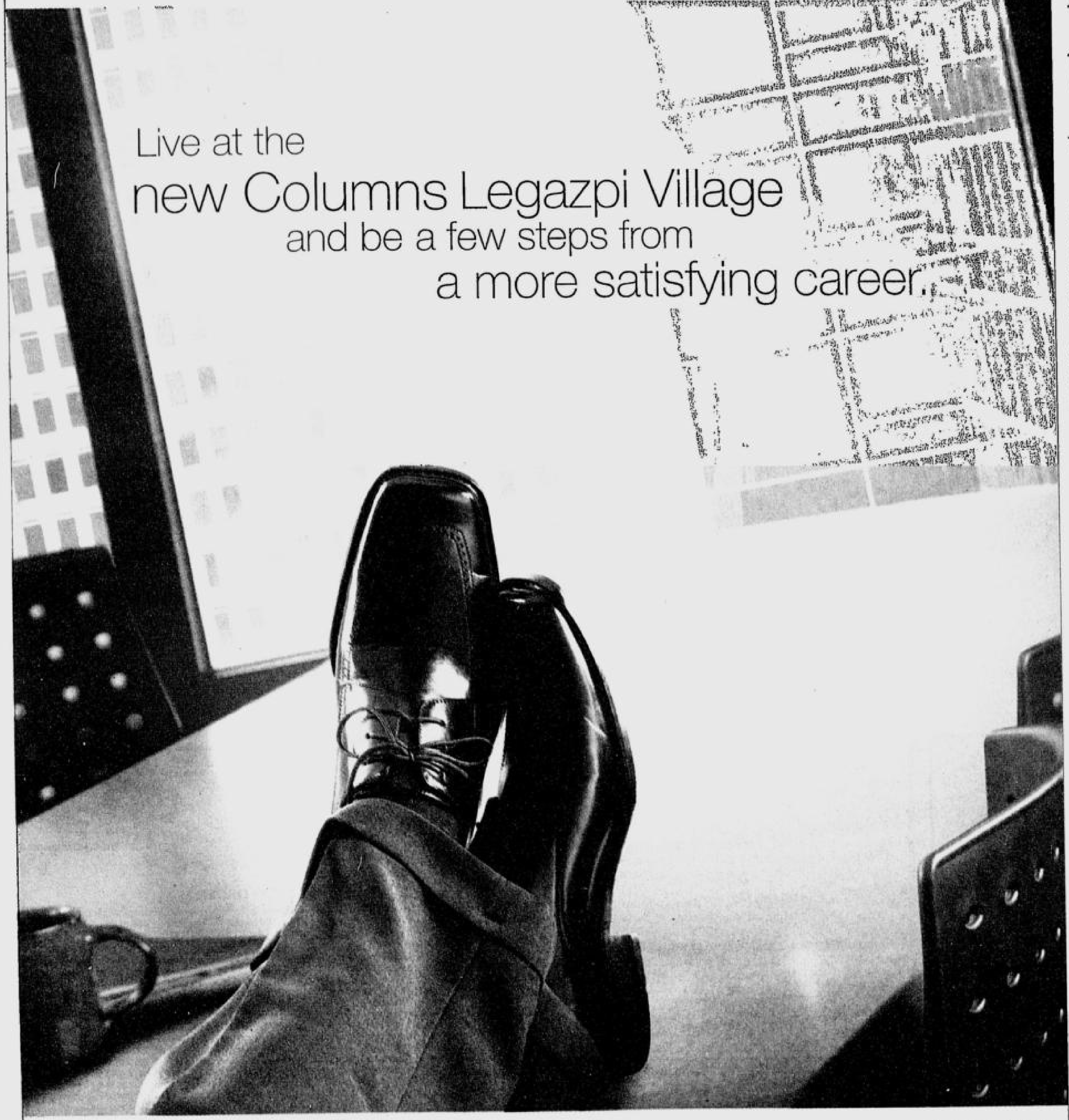

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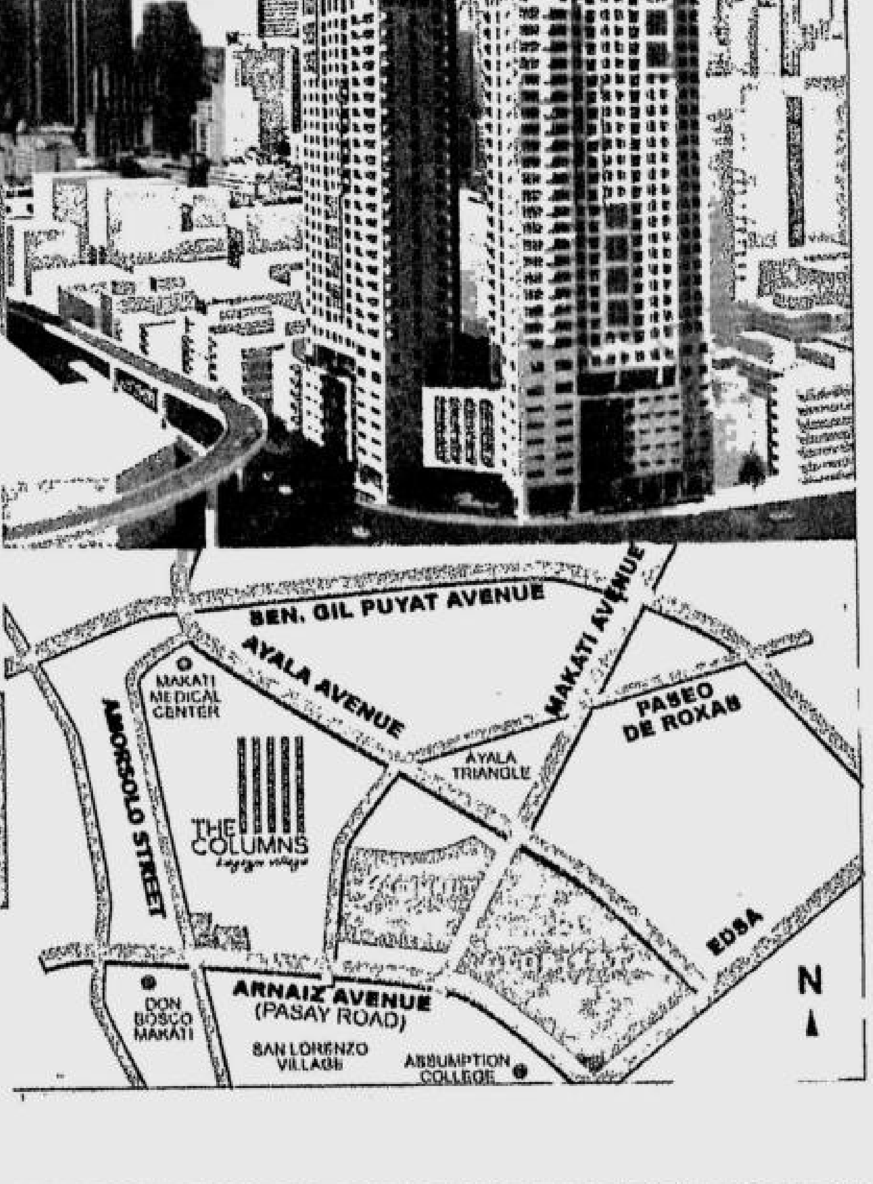

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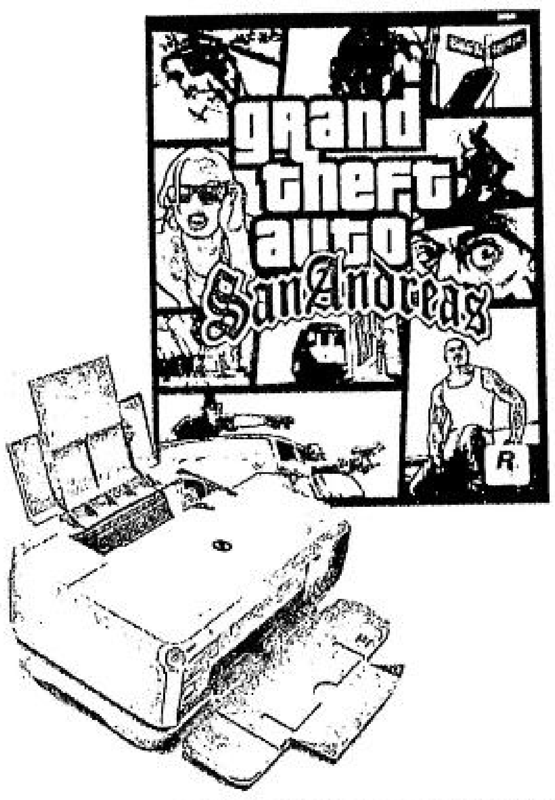
Fearless forecast for 2006



The year is off to a rocking start. This week, 2bU! celebrates the new year by peering into our crystal ball and predicting what's going to be big in fashion, music and technology: ruffled tops, gaucho pants, curly hair, fresh makeup, hot new bands, Web 2.0 and even more exciting games. Are you ready for 2006?

Sense and soul

UPDHARMADOWN'S upcoming album sizzles.

PHOTO COURTESY OF EVERYWHEREWESHOOT.COM

EXPERIENCE Pinoy Soul with Sino Sikat.

New year, new bands! And it's all about mixing sounds, influences and attitudes for a hipper, more exciting local music scene

By Maui V. Reyes
2bU! Correspondent

IF LAST YEAR WAS ALL ABOUT pop rock, 2006 is about fusing different genres for a hip new sound.

Meet some of the bands you'll be talking about this year.

Sino Sikat

Mash together jazz, soul, funk, rock and broken beats, and you get Sino Sikat. Lead vocalist Kat Agarrado, formerly with Passage band, says her music is the result of years spent flitting from one genre to another.

"I was doing pop with Passage, then when I left, *nag*-R&B *ako, nag*-lounge *ako. Tapos nag*-jazz, *tapos nag*-jam *ako* with Wally Gonzales, so blues classic *naman yun…*"

Now, with bandmates Allen Umali (bass), Nikki Cabardo (keyboards), Reli de Vera (drums), and Nick Azarcon (guitars), Sino Sikat has began attracting its own following among fans of what the band dubs as "Pinoy Soul."

Describe your music.

Di ko alam! Iba-iba, hindi talaga ma-describe. *Bawat kanta may maririnig kang* jazz, trip-hop, rock, electronica. *Tinawag kong* "Pinoy Soul." *Kasi tayong mga* Pinoy, *madami tayong mga* influences, *kahit nga yung* Kundiman *hindi naman sa atin, sa* Spaniards *siya. Kaya nga meron tayong* Pinoy Rock, Pinoy Jazz, OPM. *Kaya kami*, Pinoy Soul.

2005 was the year of pop rock. What do you think 2006 will be?

Ang lulupit ng mga lalabas na banda. Magkakalabasan ng mga talent! *Mas magkakaroon ng* choices *ang mga tao. Aban-*

SENSE/ C3

THE BOYS of Dicta License

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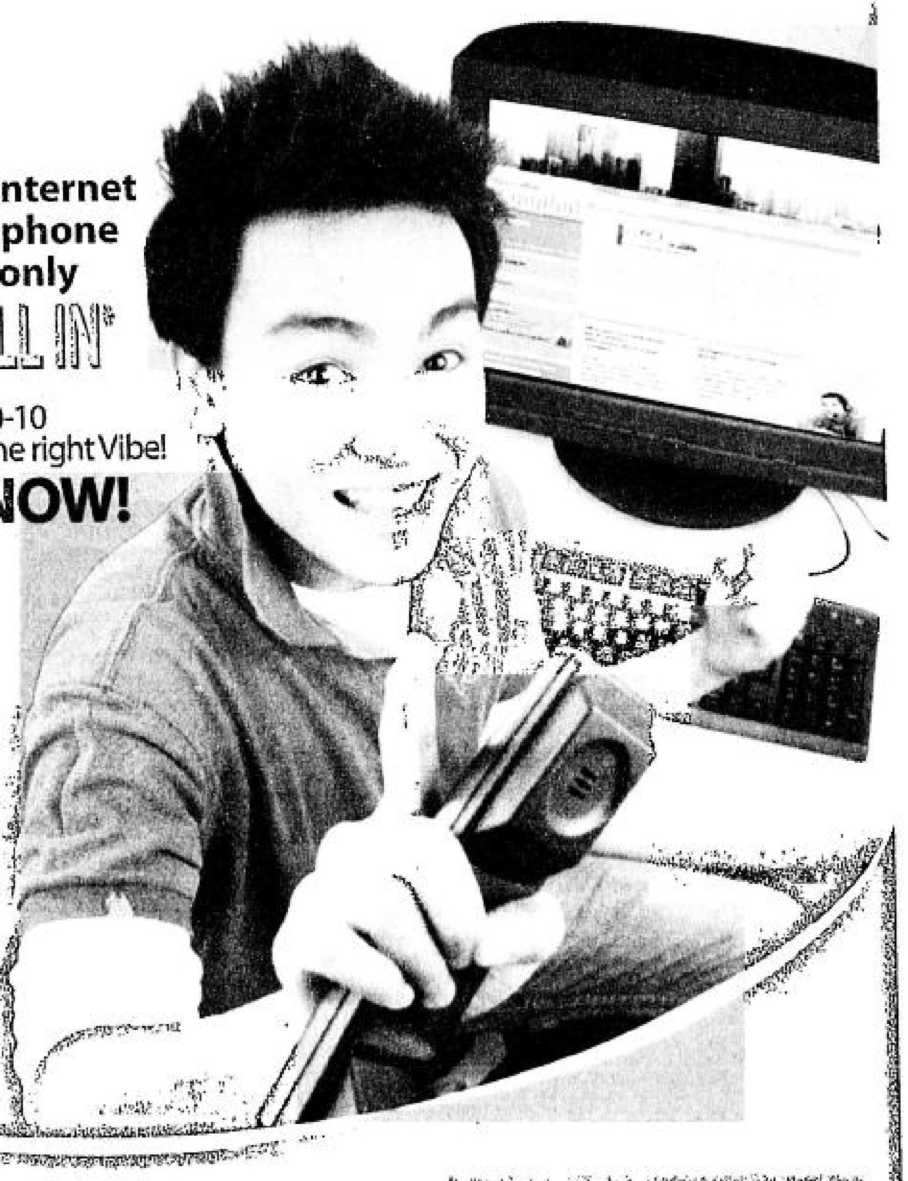

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Fashion forward

By Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent

LANCÔME'S Enchantress look focuses on pink and purple hues for Spring/Summer 2006.

FASHION LOVERS WILL HAVE TO start the year with a hangover—of 2005's fashion, that is. While the bohemian look will be nowhere near the runways this season, designers and retail brands are still taking their cues from the Edwardian and Victorian influences of the last quarter of 2005.

Because the country's tropical climate makes it impractical for women to wear high necklines and long skirts, fashion fanatics can still get their fill of the romantic period with basic tops and skirts embellished with ruffles, lace, princess sleeves, rolled edges and plait straps.

In Chocolate Clothing Co.'s upcoming Earth Angel collection, these are the things to look out for, as well as beads, glitter, pompoms, diamond-trimmed tops and Edwardian jerseys.

Also take note of jeans in light washes, cropped trucker jackets, printed hoodies, shrugs, cargo pants and chiffon halters. Crochet tops, popcorn lace tops, crushed velvet, baby doll tops, and even more vintage will be in for the upcoming seasons.

Top retail brand Freeway also focuses on the Victorian look, minus the high collars and long sleeves. This time, the Victorian look is much sexier and more modern, choosing to flaunt curves instead of hiding them.

The sentiment is echoed by fashion chain Cinderella, which will carry Victorian-inspired frills, ruffles and lace detail. Also, expect more satin and chiffon, textured puffy skirts, and '60s and preppy pieces in the future collections.

Aside from Victorian, Russian baroque fashion may be found in a few key pieces for the season: Tsarina-inspired looks, Cossack and military fashion (no loose cargos, though—the pieces are tighter and sexier, with figure-flattering jackets, capris and tops in camouflage, fatigue and khaki). Looking for these Russian- and army-inspired pieces? Check out Cinderella and Solo (a retail brand for men and women).

If looking like a war freak isn't your thing, opt for dresses, which will always be classic. However, this year's dresses are loose and flowing, as opposed to overly tight numbers. Look out for Grecian-style threads, with the hemlines a bit longer this time.

DRESSES are loose and flowing, almost Grecian-inspired.

GAUCHO pants are good for the summer.

Delicate tops

The first quarter of the year calls for delicate tops in neutral shades such as pale ivory, nude, pastels and cream. Basics such as black, khaki, gray, navy blue, burgundy, teal and plum are also palettes to look out for.

Although metallic accessories are still acceptable, this season's shades are more muted and a lot less shiny than the "hello world, look at me" gold bags, belts, jewelry and shoes of the previous seasons.

BOWS are big this season.

Shorts and cropped pants are still big, with cropped pants available in varying leg widths, from fitted to wide-leg gauchos—perfect for the upcoming hot months. These shorts come in all styles and fabrics, from soft cotton gauchos paired with tank tops, to tailored cropped pants that can go from the mall to the office.

For its part, fashion outlet Ensembles says go for all-out prints, colors and textures for a retro feel.

Josie Go of Karimadon suggests stocking up on cotton tunics, tanks and basic tees to go with bubble skirts, gaucho/palazzo pants, distressed jeans, cropped jackets, and shorts. And look for dresses for all occasions in hot fabrics such as cotton, satin, velvet and chiffon.

Shoe styles spotted on the runway are Mary Jane pumps and pretty heels (try telling that to Havaianas addicts).

Fresh-faced beauty

Beauty is more low-key this season as glowing skin, flushed cheeks, and fuss-free updos, braids and ponytails take center stage.

Say goodbye to the pasty goth look as this season calls for flawless skin, the perfect pink blush, light lip gloss, and pastel eye shadow—white seems to be a favorite in the European runways, but it may make smaller Asian eyes look nonexistent. Go for pale pastels instead to create that almost ethereal look.

Hair also stays soft and natural (do not rebond your hair!) so digital perms and soft braids are the way to go.

METALLIC accessories this year are more subdued.

Xeng Zulueta of Shu Uemura suggests a more feminine look for Spring/Summer with their Sweet Mode collection, inspired by yummy colors such as apricot, plumeria, caffe creme and vanilla sugar. She also recommended products with varied textures, such as eye jellies with a matte finish.

According to Zerline Chan from Lancôme, spring/summer's look should be reminiscent of fairies. "The Enchantress," as their season's look is called, contains shimmery pastel colors with metallic glimmer. The look is composed of eye colors in pinks, purples and greens, while key lip hues include pearly pink and plum.

E-mail the author at biancaconsunji yahoo.com

'Game na?'

By Gabriel H. Mercado
2bU! Contributor

If 'Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas,' my vote for 2005's Game Of The Year, is any indication, then we're in for a more thrilling experience this 2006

THERE'S NOTHING FEARLESS about making "fearless tech forecasts." On the contrary, my forecasts are full of fear, because writing a tech forecast is about as close as I can get to impaling myself in public. But here goes, nevertheless.

- **Web 2.0 (and other "cool" words).** Trying to decipher what Web 2.0 means will take up half this space, but from an "underlying purpose" point of view, Web 2.0 is the culmination of self-publication (blogs), and the need to receive, collaborate and work together on the information it produces. Hence, there are sites such as DIGG.com, del.icio.us, technorati and even the local oks.ph that deliver information processed elsewhere, while reliant on these technologies.

True to form, Web 2.0 is beyond websites, being heavily dependent on technologies that allow writers like me to let loose a slew of techie words: Splogs, Feeds, RSS, Atom, XML, Aggregators, Wikis, Reblogs, SEO—only some of which I understand, but at least it makes me look smart, which is the point.

Web 2.0 is what the web should be. This is far beyond your average blog. This is the "new" Internet designed and funded by techies as well, the only way to get really exciting stuff out the door and into daily use.

- **Games with a wider scope.** Looking into what people want from gaming, it's important to know what they don't want: predictable artificial intelligence. Scary-themed games that shock and gross you out rather than are truly creepy. Real-Time Strategy games that are exercises in micro-managing wood, stone, gold and crystals ad nauseam, and button-mashers that test the limits not of your intelligence, but of your mouse, game pad and thumb.

Grand Theft Auto
San Andreas
R

If "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas my vote for 2005's Game Of The Year, is any indication, then we're in for a more thrilling experience this 2006. There's the standard challenges you have to pass, but watching CJ Johnson, the game's primary character, perform them is a treat.

CJ solves the mystery of his mother's death while listening to '90s classic song hits, driving any type of vehicle in any way you want across various environments including a city, countryside, beaches, desert and miles of miles of roads. These places are so detailed that you'll spend hours just walking, running, driving, flying and jet-packing around it.

Truth is, none of the individual innovations in GTA San Andreas is special in itself. Rather, it's the collection and full application of these features that give the player such a satisfactory feeling. But the irony here is with so much to do and many things to try, this game works because it provides something a game doesn't have—an experience of real life

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Sense and soul

From page C1

gan niyo ang mga bandang UpDharmaDown at Giniling Festival. *Tataas ang* standard *ng* pop *sa* Pilipinas.

What can we expect from Sino Sikat in 2006?

Sasabog kaming parang bomba! Hindi lang maganda yung quality *ng* music, *pati* performance *namin, maganda. Lalabas na ang* album *namin sa* February or March. *Marami kaming* guests *sa* album, *tulad ni* Vic Mercado and Ian Umali. *Yung iba*, surprise *na lang!*

UpDharmaDown

UpDharmaDown is a mixture of four individuals who left their previous groups and formed a new band where each of their musical influences gets mixed up to form music like no other. The band recently bagged the In the Raw award at the 2005 NU Rock Awards, and vocalist Armi Millare hopes their luck will hold.

Try to describe your music.

It's a combination of four people who bring different genres to the table. I like soul, and I'm the lyricist, so I come up with the melody. Paul [Yap, bassist] also writes lyrics, and he's into rock, but lately he's into industrial music. Carlos [Tañada, lead guitars] likes ambient music and classical rock. Ean [Mayor, drums] likes electronica music, so he's the mastermind of all the electronica beats you hear.

Do you think this fusion of music will be a hit in 2006?

There are a lot of bands that came out last year [that play soul], but the majority are independent groups. So it's really up to the people in the industry if they will give independent bands like us some room on their playlists.

What can we expect from UpDharmaDown in 2006?

Our album! We finished it very recently. We'll be launching that. Then we're shooting our second video, "Pag-Agos."

Juan Pablo Dream

The band's video for its original song, "Nice Place," features Philippine movie icon Tony Ferrer. Can you say "Mod"? Channeling the sounds of '60s Motown, Northern Soul and '60s pop rock, Juan Pablo Dream received nods at the 2005 MTV Pilipinas Awards for Best New Artist and Best Independent Video.

MOD meets Pinoy music with Juan Pablo Dream.
PHOTO COURTESY OF EVERYWHEREWESHOOT.COM

Dicta License

Since coming together six years ago, Dicta License has evolved from "the Pinoy version of Rage Against the Machine" to an eclectic mix of rock, rap, hip-hop and soul. With their debut album, "Panghilom," Pochoy Labog (vocals), Bryan Makasiar (drums), Boogie Romero (guitars) and Kelley Mangahas (bass) are ready to rock our radios in 2006.

How did it feel like to be compared to Rage Against the Machine?

Initially, it affected us. Boogie thought it was a compliment. For some of us, *panget yun, kasi nagmukha kaming* copycat, just because Pochoy raps. Now, if people listen to the album, it's not as Rage Against the Machine as one would think. There's a lot of singing in the album, too.

How hard has the past six years been?

Very hard. It's been a long road. As a band, there have been lots of conflicts. We were about to call it quits, but then we were given the opportunity to sign up with Warner Music. *Nabuhayan ulit yung banda.* This album, "Panghilom," is six years in the making.

What can we expect from you in 2006?

We're going to continue promoting the album. There will be lots of gigs. Expect music in 2006 to be a bit heavy. Urban Dub is coming out with a new album, so is Cheese. There's going to be a healthy rock scene.

Sun Valley Crew

This isn't your usual garden-variety hip-hop group. The band that got together a decade ago with only three members has expanded to seven members, bringing together musicians from the hip-hop, electronica, and rock scene to produce a fresh, groove-worthy sound. Vocalist Uela Basco is the only female of the group.

Describe SVC's sound.

Hip-hop and R&B, like "The Roots." But Sun Valley Crew has evolved *na talaga, kasi kahit na* hip-hop *kami, nakakasama namin mga taga*-indie rock scene. Every time we have a gig, which is usually in Big Sky Mind or Saguijo, other musicians jam with us, like Buddy Zabala (of the Dawn), Vin Dancel (of Twisted Halo), the guys from Bagetsafonik.

What can we expect from SVC in 2006?

Sana malabas na yung fourth album *namin*. And the album is going to be great, unlike the third album where there was no band. And Kakoi Legaspi (formerly of Barbie's Cradle) is joining the band.

We think it's going to be a year of hot concerts—both by local and foreign acts. Here's the first one

JASON MRAZ
MR. A-Z

Jason Mraz comes back to Manila

FAST-TALKING, GUITAR-PLUCKING wordsmith Jason Mraz has orbited two albums, a world of music festivals and a whole stretch of earth to get to where he is: a geeky songwriter in the pink of platinum-selling health. Now, Mr. A-Z—which is incidentally also the name of his sophomore album—is expanding his musical horizons by reaching out to awed audiences here in the Philippines.

"While the reality-based, tongue-in-cheek freshman of 'Waiting for my Rocket' is back again," says the gangly Mraz, "I also wanted Mr. A-Z to suggest that I was ready to reveal a little more about myself. The stories within these songs find your humble King of Denial having a go at my own placement in relationships lost and found again, in the ever-changing music business, as a geek and an artist."

Mraz continues, "On Mr. A-Z, I'm posing as the more appropriate sophomore, unafraid to admit my mistakes, good-natured in my verbal attacks, yet still hanging on to enough of that sophomoric angle to avoid playing it safe. I want to allow my wisdom and perspective to resonate though a humorous persona that until now I'd only used in the live experience."

The upbeat Mr. A-Z single "Wordplay" is such an example of the trademark Mraz wit. "It's a straight satire on what a first single should sound like," he explains. "It's a track composed by a happy little boy making a masterful mockery of his own agenda, beating the average critic to the punch, if I do say so myself."

Now that he's throwing more punches, experimenting with more grooves and soundscapes while being in total character, Jason Mraz is sounding better than ever. So it won't be a surprise to find the Rockwell and NBC venues packed with converts for "Jason Mraz Live in Manila."

Ticket rates: Jan. 20, Rockwell Tent, P2,000 and P1,000; and Jan. 21, NBC Tent, P2,000, P1,500, P1,000, and P500. Tickets available at SM Ticketnet outlets.

"Waiting for My Rocket to Come" and "Mr. A-Z" by Jason Mraz are distributed by Warner Music Philippines and available in music stores nationwide.

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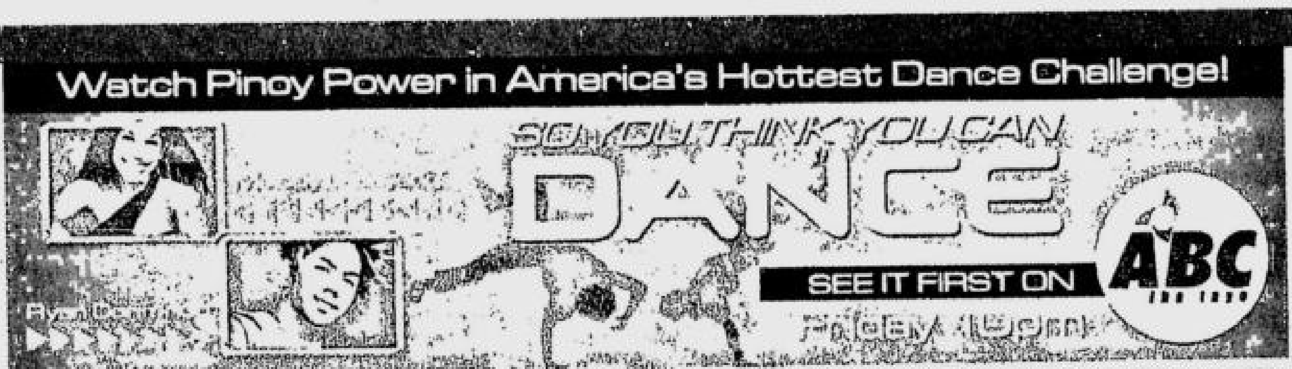
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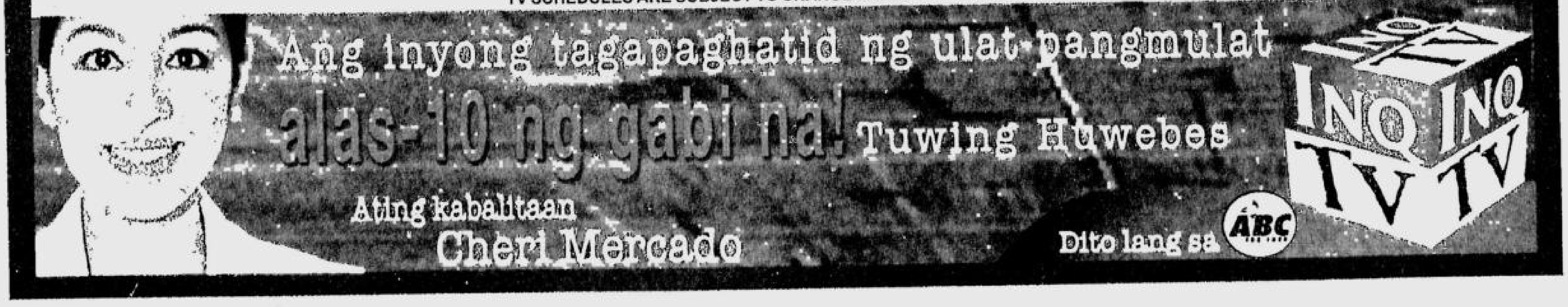
Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	Rockstar: Inxs		Dokyu	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Pilipinas Game KNB?	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Only You	Vietnam Rose	Pinoy Big Brother	S.O.C.O.			Insider
AXN		House		Las Vegas		Ripley's Believe It or Not		PSI Factor (Season III)		24		Mondo Magic	Samsung Sports World	Ultimate Guinness World Records	Ultimate Guinness World Records	CSI: Miami (Season 3)		CSI (Season 5)	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Acceleracers GP			The Grim Adv. Of Billy & Mandy		Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Machine Robo-Rescue	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinemax			20,000 League Under The Sea				Prehystorial 2			The Survivors Club			Cabin Fever			Flashdance			
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Disney Channel	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/ [illegible] Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			American Dragon		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Rangers	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN						Pro Billiards '05 BCA Open 9-Ball		Boxing Series Friday Night Fights				Sportscenter Asia	Col. Football Game '05 Orange Bowl						Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Commited	Knock First	Edited Version Of Today Show		Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	Complete Savages	What I Like About You	Veronica Mars		Last Comic Standing		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	Marriage Works In Christ	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Faith In Motion	Adventures In Odyssey	EWTN Original Productions	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Defending Life	EWTN Gallery	In The Heart Of The Church	Mother Angelica Live Classics		One In Their Hearts	Catholic Social Teaching	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	Carpenter's Shop	Our Father's Plan	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record w/ Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Etheria	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV	Five Days To Midnight		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Who's The Boss	Bewitched IV	The Nanny III	Changi		Five Days To Midnight		Hawking			Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		Strong Medicine
HBO			L.A. County 187 (3:45 PM)			Radio (5:15 PM)				Short Circuit (7:15 PM)				Hollywood Homicide				Beyond Borders	
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network		TBA				Up Close And Personal	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	Shorties Watching Shorties	South Park	Banzai	Wwe Raw				Filter	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Mad TV		Dr. Katz	Premium Blend	Shorties Watching Shorties	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Mad TV		The Sib Show	Street Smarts
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Wolfgang Puck's	TBA		Style Star	Life & Style		Intimate Portrait		Breathing Room	Genuine Article
MTV Philippines	Jams	Whatever Things	MTV Hits	Hanging Out	The 70's House	Pop Inc		MTV Hits				Homecoming	Get Spotted	TRL		Viva La Bam	Laguna Beach	Get Hitchd	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	OPM MYX	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	MYXLOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top 10		MYX Live!		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Protecting The President		Faces And Places			Extreme Latitude	Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		N.G. Specials		Made In Hong Kong		Faces And Places	
NBN		Value Vision		New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	3rd ASEAN Para-Olympic Games				Teledyaryo				Krusada Kontra Kremen		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues/ What Planet Are You From	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	My Life As A Teenage Robot	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	The Fairly Odd Parents			1, 2, 3	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Chalkzone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia		
PBO			Lucio Margallo				Daddy Na Si Chito				Side A Acoustic				Ang Syota Kong Balikbayan				Huling Paghihintay
Qtv		Bodyguard	Striker Hungry Heart	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Star	Hotelier	All In	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	Pusong Wagi		News On Q	Balikbayan		Groupee TV	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Iron Chef		Trading Spouses		Extreme Make-Over		Newswatch Now	Keep Up The Good Work		
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Bmg Video			
Solar Sports	IBF China Open Fns Mixed Doubles			Watsons Water Challenge Day1						Sagupaan	NBA Jam	Sportsdesk	Watsons Water Challenge Day1						NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus	This Is The PGA Tour		Golf Hawaii 2004	Big 12 College Football						NBA Game Phi @ Sac					NBA Game Hou @ Wash				
Star Movies				Another Pretty Face			The LXG				Robocop (7:20 PM)			Commando			Catch That Kid		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	Smallville		Medical Investigation		The Practice		Friends	Smallville
Studio 23								Batman Beyond	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	The Amazing Race Family Ed		CSI (8:20 PM)	Life As We Know It		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.


Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
alas-10 ng gabi na! Tuwing Huwebes
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

CANON PIXMA IP3000

Printer to the holiday rescue

By Gabriel H. Mercado
2bU! Contributor

TO BE HONEST, IT'S BEEN A LONG while since I've tried out a printer of any kind. My work as a web developer is to blame, as dexterity in things related to the Internet and anything electronic allows one to move around relatively paperless. I have, however, worked with printers great and small in the past, from huge hulking lasers to swift, silent inkjets and enormous buzzing dot matrices.

And so I approached the Canon Pixma iP3000 with a measure of trepidation, not only due to insecurity over my lack of recent printer experience, but also because I would have to find things to print.

Fortunately, I found ways to go around both before submission time. It was Christmas during the time of this review, and I happened to have a bored 11-year-old niece.

See, Christmas means Christmas decorations, and a young "Art Attack"-brainwashed niece means someone in the house who likes to make them. Throw the Canon Pixma iP3000 into the mix, and you have a Christmas décor-making factory (sans Neil Buchanan's British accent, but trust me it's often tried).

Further, throw in the photos I took with the superlative Canon Camedia C-480 Zoom and Fujitsu Finepix F-810 cameras previously lent for review by Digital Exchange (Glorietta 3), and we had a bonanza of all things Christmasy for the holiday season.

All-purpose

The Canon Pixma iP3000 is an all-purpose "photo printer" that uses bubble-jet technology. It employs four cartridges which produce four ink colors, and resolutions of 600 x 600 dpi for black and 4800 x 1200 dpi for color. Print speed is an impressive 22 pages per minute (ppm) for black and 15 ppm for color. A true-color photograph can take approximately 36 seconds to print, although that can vary widely depending on situations.

PictBridge capability—that godsend of an application for photo-happy digital camera owners and printers alike—is blessedly present on the iP3000, while the usual plethora of photo-editing and printing software drivers for different operating systems are there as well, so Mac users are well represented.

You can print on the usual legal, letter and envelope sizes, plus the rather lengthily named "Canon Photo Paper Plus Glossy 4" x 6" Sample Pack," and even on CD-R and DVD-R printable disks. A CD Tray is included for this purpose.

Aesthetically, the iP3000's dark gray casing when closed makes it look like, well, a breadbox. Canon probably designed it for a gray cubicle type of working application, and, admittedly, that would fit its 16.5" x 6.8" quite nicely.

There's really nothing wrong with looking like a misplaced kitchen appliance. However, a posh workplace would best consider a cabinet or at least some covering, as the printer's gray hulk would surely clash with the wood paneling and gold-plated lamp.

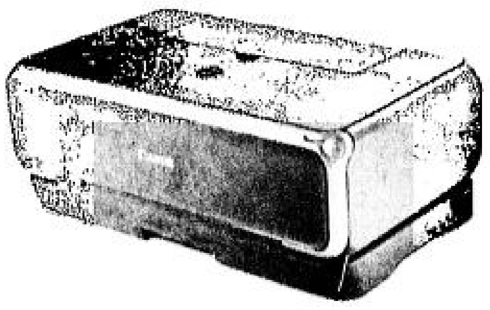
The printer does not come with a cable. It can use either a USB or parallel cable, so it leaves you to make that choice. But it can be frustrating, as it took me a while to find someone to lend me one.

Functional

Still, the Canon Pixma iP3000 is a breeze to set up and get running. It looks rather impressive with all its access nodes open, like something hostile the Starship Enterprise might have encountered in deep space. But it's very functional and easy enough to figure out.

Overall, I was impressed primarily with the iP3000's speed and quiet operation. Bored niece and holiday season notwithstanding, the Canon iP3000 is a solid performer and a good daily photo printer.

Check it out at the Canon store at Digital Exchange G3.



Pair a Canon Pixma iP3000 with an 'Art Attack'-brainwashed niece, and you've got an instant décor factory

CANON Pixma iP3000

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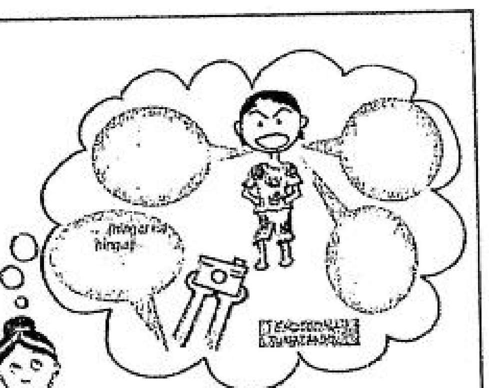

We have a winner!

SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD Katrien Dagmang of Marikina City has won an Olympus C-480, thanks to her hilarious Power Point presentation. You made our first day back at work even more fun. With your creativity, we know you can maximize the use of this camera, Katrien. Please call Ching de la Cruz at 8978808 for details on how to claim your prize.

You, too, can be a winner!

This week, 2bU! and Digital Exchange are giving away a Canon Pixma iP3000. If you want to join our contest, tell us why you deserve to win this printer in the most creative way you can. E-mail your entries to contest2bu@inquirer.com.ph. Don't forget your name, school/office and contact info!